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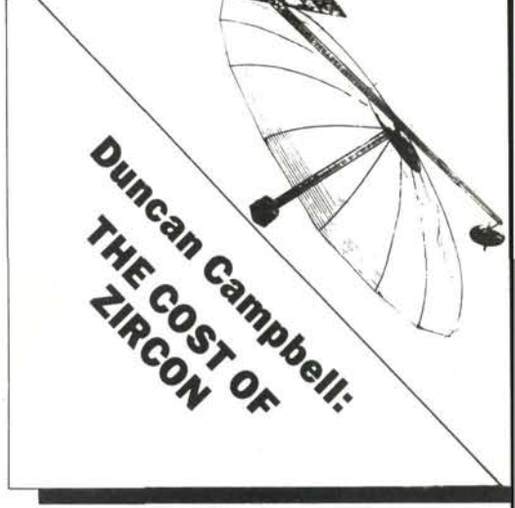

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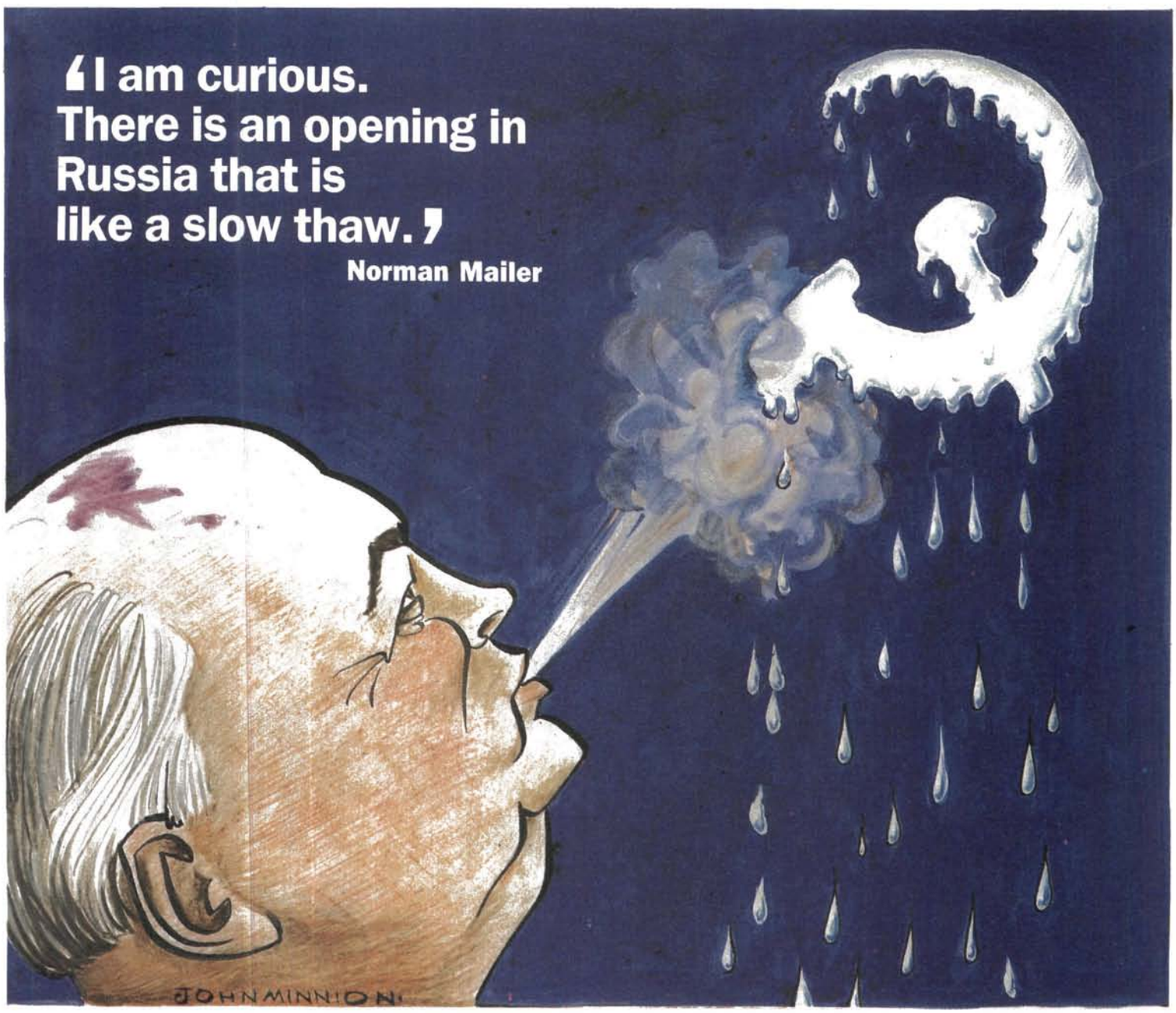

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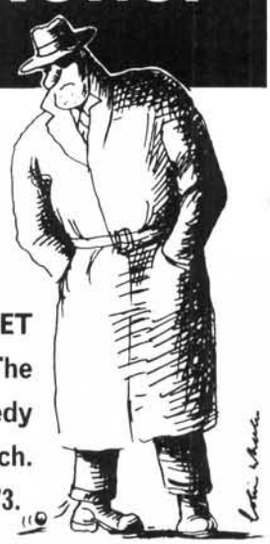

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 113 No 2918 27 February 1987

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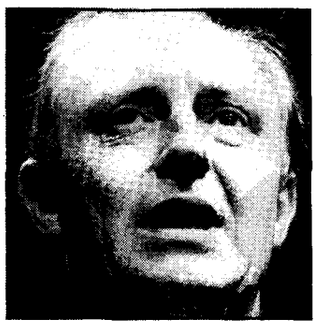

YES, IT'S disgraceful. The press coverage of Labour in general, Neil Kinnock, Glenys Kinnock and Deirdre Wood in particular, is all of that. We cannot say that 'it shows you what to expect come the election': the election, for the Tory tabloids, is already upon us and the savaging is under way. This is it.

In the past two weeks, the Rupert Murdoch stablemates devoted large spaces to revealing that Deirdre Wood 'lied' about her age (they could not find one verbatim quote, or verbatim report, that she had done so); that she had consigned her father to a lonely death in a Salvation Army Hostel; that she had occuped a (council) flat until a house she and her husband had bought was inhabitable; and Neil Kinnock is frightened to change Labour's policies because of his wife.

These papers are not alone. Earlier this week, the *Sunday Express* ran a poll which showed the Alliance rushing up to only 6 points behind Labour, the closest margin to that date. Yet the poll, a telephone one by a company formed last December named Telephone Surveys, did not correct for demographics, housing tenure or telephone ownership — and thus underplayed Labour support and overplayed Tory support. In a contest like Greenwich, where the 'bandwagon' effect was everything, the poll could have been crucially important in influencing voters' intentions.

On the same day, the *Mail on Sunday* splashed with a story headlined 'Unions squeeze Kinnock'. It alleged that the electricians' union, the EETPU, is insisting on vetting Labour candidates before it contributes to the party's election funds: that NUPE had refused to pay any more to the Trade Unions for Labour Victory organisation; that the engineering, APEX and construction unions had put off contributing to the election funds on political grounds. All the unions have since denied the substance of the claims: NUPE is considering legal action. Bill Keys, chairman of the TUFL, says the unions have financial problems: hardly a story of Kinnock squeezed; indeed, hardly a story at all. But it contributes to the Labour-on-the-ropes impression to which most newspaper political coverage is now bent.

Yes, it's disgraceful: but is it whingeing to say so? Partly, it is. A free press will be partisan and inaccurate: more, its partisanship will dictate inaccuracies, at times downright lies. The hostility of much of Fleet Street's proprietorship to a Labour victory is as deep, and much less inhibited, than ever before: it can be no surprise to party leaders or candidates that the kitchen is now very hot indeed. The personal pressure now being heaped on Kinnock, and under which Wood has suffered too, is a reflection of that. For the latter, her position on the party's left is a matter of public record, and she cannot complain that it should now be a matter of press and public debate.

But beyond a certain point, the excuses run out. Deirdre Wood has not merely been legitimately questioned on her politics, she has been taken apart in public. The attempt by the *News of the World* to make a political issue out of a family tragedy which affected no one *but* her family was a sickening piece of mauling with which no standard of journalism should want to be associated. This was not the robust challenging which anyone in public life has to face, and should face if they are to survive in politics. It was garbage.

There is some comfort in this: it is two-fold. First, the sheer awfulness of the *NoW*'s intended assault produced a reaction of sympathy for the candidate — rightly. Those who practice that kind of journalism might get the message that it does not even serve the ends to which it had been dedicated, and lay off.

Second, the fact that the real muck is thrown *at* the left shows that decency has deserted much of the right, which can no longer distinguish between polemic and abuse. □

NEXT WEEK

The Future of Socialism: a special issue of the *New Statesman*

The *New Statesman* will devote the entire issue of 6 March to a series of articles on The Future of Socialism. We will focus on new developments in socialist thinking, which are now laying the basis for a revival in the left and for the creation of a socialist philosophy which takes on the right on the central issue of freedom. Among our authors are Sarah Benton, Frank Field, Harriett Gilbert, Julian LeGrand, Roy Hattersley, Paul Hirst, Eric Hobsbawm, Peter Kellner, Raymond Plant and John Urry.

The Future of Socialism issue will be a landmark for all those looking for the intellectual ammunition to take on the right. It is aimed at stimulating debate, based on a firm foundation of revived democratic socialist principles and aims. Above all, it will show that the left has great tasks yet to perform — and that it is capable of performing them.

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PEACE FORUM DIARY

Moscow

For the first time since the revolution the patriarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church were officially present in the grand hall of the Kremlin Palace to meet in dialogue with the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. They were part of a 250-strong delegation representing the concerns of religion at the much larger International Peace Forum last week.

The religious section contained not only a wide spectrum of Christian believers but Buddhists, Jews, Moslems, Hindus and Shintoists. At such meetings in the past, speeches and resolutions have been designed to put America in the dock and Western guilt has stifled any legitimate objection to the process. Now there was a mood of reconciliation. The rhetoric of accusation was noticeably absent until the report of the religious section at the final plenary. Then the speaker seemed, with Pavlovian conditioning, to respond to the microphone by attacking America. The shocked reaction among the whole section and their explicit criticism afterwards was convincing evidence of the new climate. A few years ago this speech would have received general approbation.

○

The Forum itself was planned to allow a fresh style of open dialogue. The traditional pre-arranged agenda with a succession of papers fired off like mortar bombs from fixed positions was no longer encouraged.

The event ended with a final plenary when the fresh thinking of the previous days' work emerged in a lively series of reports from the various sections. The most startling of these was the contribution of Graham Greene. Speaking, as the author said, for nobody but himself, one had the impression that Monsignor Quixote was riding again. He broke a lance in defence of the three priests, the two Brothers Cardinale, and Miguel Descoto, who had been frowned on by the Vatican for taking office in the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Marxists and Christians have to work together, declared Greene, and confessed to a dream that, one day, there would be a Soviet ambassador to the Vatican giving wise advice to a pope.

○

Gorbachev, in his address to the Forum, continued the theme of 'revolutionary change'. In domestic issues the Russians were concentrating on 'constructive endeavours to improve their country' which determine their foreign policy and therefore threaten no one. In international relations he believed the human race could no longer afford the 'stone age' attitudes which were dangerously persisting into the era of nuclear weapons. A quite different way of solving conflicts had got to be discovered: we needed a 'demilitarised' world.

The old Marxist ideology showed through in some of his language — but there were continual hints of rethinking. He talked of 'new forms of civic activity and restoration of those which were unfairly forgotten': perhaps an oblique reference to the Orthodox Church?

○

In spite of the pressure of business, the religious section found time for a three-hour liturgy in the recently restored Danilov monastery. This was an experience which transcended the babel of languages and reminded the members of some of the fundamentals of communication.

The walled complex of buildings had until three years ago been annexed by the state as a detention centre for young people. Its restoration to the church was another of the signs of spring. 'Don't call it a Prague Spring' said a bearded metropolitan and the readiness to joke was also evidence of change.

The working sessions, which were held in a series of meeting rooms in a sumptuous hotel, were all dominated by posters displaying the title of the Forum: 'For a nuclear weapons free world — for the survival of humanity'. Where else but in Eastern Europe would slogan writers have succeeded in producing something quite so leaden-footed?

The Theology group expanded the concern from 'survival' to a discussion of a vision of a renewed creation. The Buddhists, with their reverence for life, made common cause with the Christians and Jews who have a sense of the urgency of the present time in history. In the final appeal that the whole section adopted unanimously were the questions: 'If not us, who?' 'If not now, when?'

The area where action was required embraced not only disarmament but a just distribution of the world's resources and a concern for the total environment. Nuclear winter is only one instance of the way in which the heedless exploitation of the earth may so alter the ecological balance that life becomes extinct. This possibility which stems from the achievements of science allowing human beings to make irreversible changes in the age-long process of evolution must be a joint concern of science and religion.

Human rights formed part of the discussion about justice. In particular there was the question of freedom of belief. Western participants recognised that their media have a heavy bias towards the accounts of persecuted dissidents. They recognised that there were ugly things which ought to be recorded. Yet there was evidence that there were examples of what Gorbachev calls 'information aggression' rather than objective reporting. Sometimes religious beliefs can almost invite persecution as a way of authenticating itself. This is not difficult to do in a state which has a greater interest in maintaining order than avoiding oppression.

○

Quite apart from the public meetings, there were opportunities for quiet conversation and exploration in some depth of the church life of Russia. There was a chance to hear personal testimony and to share in both the hopes and struggles of people who minister to Christian congregations. There was no doubt about the vitality of the faith and spirituality which flourishes.

○

In the West the doubts still linger. For the moment, with the moratorium on nuclear tests and the initiatives at Reykjavik, the Russian leader has won a moral victory in the eyes of the world. Is this the wolf trying to lure Red Riding Hood into his power?

If the West stubbornly holds to its view that it must not give way an inch for fear of being duped, a window of opportunity may close. The religious section declared: 'We must dismantle the enemy images.' The politicians, with solid pragmatism declared: 'It's better to test Gorbachev than to test nuclear bombs.'

There is a danger that we will be so sophisticated in our search for hidden motives, attributing subtle chess playing to the Russians, that we will miss the obvious fact that a world at peace is to everyone's advantage.

The enormous expense undertaken by the Soviet Union in assembling so widely representative a gathering was another way of expressing Mr Gorbachev's thought that: 'a people that knows and values the culture and art of other peoples can have no ill-feeling towards them.' His sense of urgency had a ring of truth about it. One does not have to be a naive enthusiast to return from the Forum with the hope that the future could be different from the past.

Michael Hare-Duke

Michael Hare-Duke is Bishop of St Andrews.
See also Jeremy Leggett, p8.

ROGER WODDIS

You're Fixational

(Acknowledgments to Cole Porter)

Alexander Haig, former US Secretary of State, told the Conservative Political Action Group in Washington that it would be 'the height of short-sightedness' to accept claims of liberalisation in the Soviet Union.
'High Society' opens in London this week

I'm aghast
When people say you're frozen in the past,
But you're fixational.
I don't mind
If you should think the rest of us
Are blind,
'Cause you're fixational

Making sense is quite an art;
It would be strange
If you could arrange
A change of heart.

And if one day (as well it may)
The sky should chance to fall,
You'll have a ball,
'Cause you're fixational,
Fixational, that's all.

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The trickle-up effect

MRS THATCHER can lay claim to be the most redistributivist prime minister for decades. It has been and remains a redistribution from the bottom — to the top.

Over the period since 1979, tax has increased for all but the highest paid 5 per cent of the population (roughly those with gross incomes over £27,000 a year). Cuts in income tax have been more than balanced by the 50 per cent increase in national insurance contributions and the near doubling of VAT. But within the income tax cuts, the benefits have been massively skewed. An answer I have just received from the Treasury reveals that while workers on average earnings have gained about £270 a year, *top directors and executives in the biggest companies on over £70,000 a year have each received tax handouts worth an average of £19,100 a year.*

The chairmen and top executives in Britain's largest companies who have incomes this year in excess of £1,400 a week, are now enjoying the benefits of tax cuts worth about £370 a week on average for each individual. That is nearly three times the total weekly earnings after tax and national insurance of an average-paid single man.

These colossal gains have accrued to the over-£70,000 a year top director class from three main sources: the cut in the top rate of income tax in 1979 from 83 per cent to 60 per cent; big increases in the higher rate tax thresholds; and the progressive reduction and finally abolition in 1985 of the investment income surcharge. As a result, this top group of money-makers, who number 50,000 and represent one-quarter of 1 per cent of the total workforce, have amassed amost 10 per cent of all the tax cut gains since 1979 — nearly 40 times what they would have received on the basis of an equal share-out among all employed people.

It isn't only income tax concessions which have been massively unequal. A second major factor in the redistribution of the Thatcher years has been the highly unequal rise in pre-tax earnings between the classes, which has strongly reinforced the huge inequalities generated by the Tories' tax cuts philosophy. The Treasury's latest earnings survey in 1986 reveals that whilst the lowest paid 10 per cent of male workers have seen their pre-tax earnings rise in real terms by no more than 3.7 per cent between 1979-86, the highest paid 10 per cent have enjoyed real rises in pre-tax earings of at least 22.3 per cent — over six times as much.

A third factor reinforcing the redistribution towards the rich yet further has been the expansion of perks. Again, those of the biggest value are overwhelmingly concentrated on the rich. 'Job status' cars, for example, according to the latest HAY-MSL survey, are supplied only above an average minimum salary level of £18,700. For senior executives they found the value of such cars varied from £9,900 to £14,200.

Even these benefits are dwarfed by the potential gains from share option schemes limited to top executives. Dr Robb Wilmott, when he was brought in by ICI as managing director in 1981, was not only given a salary of £150,000 and a near-£300,000 house to live in, but also enabled to make £700,000 on options on 1.4 million shares granted him on his arrival. Under the share option scheme approved last month at Burton's, 80 senior executives could be eligible for options worth up to eight times their annual remuneration. Given that Burton's recently notorious chairman and chief executive, Sir Ralph Halpern, was paid £1 million last year, a limit of £2.5 million was brought in by the embarrassed board under pressure from shareholders.

The redistributive impact of these three forces combined can scarcely be over-estimated. Britain is not polarising simply into a North-South or rich-poor divide. There is a more complex four-way split: a swollen under-class of the unemployed generating mass poverty for the first time for half a century; a growing proletariat of low-paid workers whose standard of living is gradually being forced down; a majority of the workforce on average or above-average incomes who have made modest gains; and a small minority of the very rich for whom the Thatcher regime has been a Croesus-like licence to print money on a magnitude that scarcely seems real. Not for a long time has the politics of greed been so triumphantly in the ascendant.

Michael Meacher

Michael Meacher is Shadow Secretary for Health and Social Security — see also Economics, p20.

The biter bit

YOU WILL know, or will soon know, who is the victor at Greenwich: if it's Deirdre, some said, it is thanks to the *News of the World* and their comradely rolling out of the sympathy vote (see leader p3).

The incident was a triumph for Labour's publicity machine. Forewarned that the *NoW* was to devote a 2-page spread to the shock report that Deirdre and her family had slung out her father to fend for himself, and finally to die, in a Salvation Army hostel, Labour called a press conference last Saturday to refute the allegations. The party invited Stuart Collier, author of the story (and of the earlier prizewinning story, on 15 February, 'Deirdre's big fat fib', detailing the allegation that the candidate lied about her age, though neither she nor anyone else could be quoted as saying when and how she had done so) to put the allegations direct to her.

Collier turned up at the press conference: realising that the reason for its existence was his own miserable story, he showed his faith in it by taking to his heels, pursued by a BBC camera crew: he finally took refuge in a telephone box. The result: a tearfully sympathetic Deirdre on network news, and a pathetically small *NoW* story on the press conference itself — the fearless exposer having been deterred by threats of a writ from the Labour Party, taken out under the Representation of the People's Act.

Worse — the next day's *Sun* story about Deirdre and her husband sensibly staying on in their council flat until a house they'd just bought was

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— *Auberon Waugh*
31 January 1987

All right, all right, so the full quote (*Spectator* 31 January) was: 'The Kremlin has only to take out a subscription to the *New Statesman, Spectator*, and *Literary Review* to learn all it needs to know about what is happening in this country'. What the hell.

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made habitable was tucked away, since even the *Sun* could see it might rebound on them if splashed.

Meanwhile, out on the streets . . . the Tories were fielding what Andrew Rawnsley of the *Guardian* described as the Z team. It was composed of the disgraced (Jeffrey Archer), the deposed (Edward Heath) and the defiant (Michael Heseltine) — to say nothing of the who? (Richard Tracey, Sports Minister). ●

Female apostles

THE CHURCH of England's male chieftains line up this week to decide whether or not to allow women into the last bastion of male supremacy — the ministerial priesthood. Most of the Protestant churches have long since opened their doors to women priests, and yet the Anglican Church remains poised between its traditions of liberal progressiveness on the one hand, and its claims to be the Catholic Church in England on the other.

On Thursday the General Synod will vote on a bishops' report which recommends that legislation be drawn up for women's ordination. If passed, the legislation will be put on ice until a two-thirds majority can be reached in all three houses — bishops, clergy and laity. Although the present synod has a majority in favour of women priests, it only has the necessary two-thirds in the house of bishops. The next synod elections — in 1990 — will therefore be fought tooth and nail on the issue.

Yet whatever the outcome of Thursday's vote, women priests are inevitable. It is simply a matter of when. Since 1975, when the synod voted that there were no fundamental theological objections to the ordination of women, the controversy has centred on translating this principle into reality.

The main argument of the conservative Anglo-Catholic wing, which includes Dr Graham Leonard, the Bishop of London, and John Selwyn Gummer, the agriculture minister, is that fundamental doctrinal changes cannot be made until the Church is back in communion with Rome. Proponents of women priests, who include the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, argue that the Church's first allegiance is to the world-wide Anglican Church, the Anglican Communion. The Communion already has 750 women priests in Canada, US, Uganda, Kenya, Brazil and New Zealand.

Last July the synod voted against recognising these priests, by making it illegal for them to celebrate communion while in England — in spite of Dr Runcie urging that 'We cannot have Little Englanders in the matter of Church unity.' Once again there was a majority in favour of women priests, but not a large enough one.

The other Anglo-Catholic arguments concern theology, tradition and symbolism. They claim that if God had wanted women priests, he would have appointed female apostles. Others disagree, saying that Jesus went as far as he could, given the male-dominated society of the time.

Christian feminism, which took off in the late '60s, has been instrumental in changing women's attitudes to the Church. They either left in disgust, or stayed on to fight from within, forming groups such as the Movement for the Ordination for Women, which has over 3,000 members. Gummer thinks the Church is being blackmailed by secular movements: 'I find it impossible to believe that until Germaine Greer came along, we had got it all wrong for 2,000 years'. Rev. William Oddie, another prominent Anglo-Catholic, claims the Church has been hijacked by loony left-wing bishops, anxious to ape American fads. 'American men are so besotted with bourgeois guilt feelings that they're a soft touch. The women, on the other hand, are as hard as nuts.'

For the time being it is the clergy who remain the most opposed to women priests. Rev. Driscoll, a liberal member of Priests for Women's Ordination, says it is a case of the 'male also-rans' anxious to hang on to their jobs. However, the number of men coming forward with vocations these days is flagging, and there are hundreds of women deaconesses waiting in the wings.

Colleen Johnson

If the caption fits

No 7

You were all out canvassing for the People's Choice, obviously, leaving entries for caption comp No 5 in the hands of a bunch of awful fattists. The ideological purity collective was *not impressed*, and has submitted its own entry (below). The £10 prize has been donated to the Labour Party's general election fund. Entries for Messrs Russell Harty and Derek Hatton to reach us by Tuesday 10 March for publication in the issue of 13 March. On your marks — get set — go!

No 5

NK: 'Bad news, I'm afraid, Deirdre.'
DW: 'Another opinion poll?'
NK: 'No, your arm came away in my hand.'

NEWSTATESPERSON

The sectarian

EVERYONE, they say, has a sticking point, and for John Selwyn Gummer it seems it has been allowing women equality with men. Otherwise his has not been a career remarkable for its consistency. He rose in the party when it was damp: a chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students when they were nicer, he made money from business publishing and twice lost at Greenwich before securing Lewisham West in 1970. His first Commons job was as James Prior's private parliamentary secretary (when Prior was at Agriculture); he was made a party vice-chairman in 1972. Heath and he were terribly close: Gummer's wife, Penelope, was a Heath secretary.

Yet he wrote speeches for Mrs Thatcher after she defeated Heath for the party leadership: his were said to be of the 'corner-softening' kind, though few noticed the difference. Soon after re-entering the Commons in 1979 (for Eye) he was made a junior whip (1981): his profile was sufficiently low, not to say opportunist, for him to be described as coming from 'the left of the party'. When, two years later, he was made junior employment minister (under Norman Tebbit) he was described as 'a strong Thatcher supporter'. It clearly paid to be ill-defined.

Religion, and a salient morality in public utterances, had impressed the Leader: Gummer had passionately attacked the unilateralists at the 1983 Synod of the Church of England (of which he is a long-time member) and had put down a marker for his views in a 1971 work, *The Permissive Society* — which makes a strong case against abortion. Keeping women in their place, in both church and home, seems to be what animates Gummer most.

Over-promoted to be chairman of the Conservative Party in September 1983, he quickly attracted grumbling from the back benches over 'lack of weight'. The bon viveur tendency thought him a pain and the even larger let's-win-again club thought him agony. In September 1985, he was shuffled to be Agriculture Minister, where he disappeared beneath green pounds, cereal price restraint systems and suckler cow premia.

Only the woman question has saved him from obscurity. In August 1985, just before his demotion, he formed the Association for an Apostolic Ministry with some diehard churchmen, on the explicit platform of creating a schismatic church if the ordination of women were adopted by Synod.

There is clearly more to the owl-eyed 47-year-old vicar's son than pious brightness. His dedication to holding back the tide of women in the priesthood is sincere, deeply felt and free from any trace of the opportunism which has veined his politics. Earlier this week, he told the *Independent* that the ordination of women would 'divorce us from the rest of the catholic church and would make us a sect. I, like so many others, would be forced out of the Church of England'. The Conservative Party's former chairman has found peace of mind and purity of heart in being a genuine reactionary. ●

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PETER KELLNER

Four myths about Labour's past that block the future

AFTER GREENWICH Labour will need to return to basics. Despite a professionally impeccable campaign on the ground, with a well-designed colour election address, intelligently-used computers, intensive canvassing, a personable candidate and sensible handling of the media, Labour struggled to defend what ought to be a safe seat. Nationally, despite having an attractive leader, the best-oiled publicity machine that anyone can remember, and the most united leadership since before Harold Wilson became Prime Minister, Labour's support still hovers on the wrong side of the narrow gap between defeat and triumph. Why?

It is always possible to avoid looking at deep-seated problems by taking out our frustrations on the 'if onlys' of politics. If only the Greenwich Labour Party had selected Glenys Thornton instead of Deirdre Wood; if only Arthur Scargill and Derek Hatton had taken a one-way flight to Chernobyl last spring; if only Neil Kinnock spoke in shorter sentences. These matters are all worthy of comment, but they do not reach the heart of the problem. Labour has a more fundamental handicap which threatens to reduce the party to the role of impotent observer from the sidelines: it has no basic, agreed or understood purpose.

Next week the *NS* will publish a special issue on the future of socialism, as a contribution to the widening debate about directions for the left in Britain. But before we explore the future we need to understand the present; and to do that we need to dislodge some myths about the past.

Myth one: Labour was created to bring socialism to Britain. In fact, Labour's original constitution offered only one object: 'to organise and maintain in Parliament and the country a political Labour Party'. Clause IV paragraph 4 did not appear until 1918 when the trade unions decided to indulge the Webbs, whose idea it was.

In those days, even more than now, the unions determined Labour's shape. The party had no individual members. At its party conferences 98 per cent of the votes were wielded by the unions and 2 per cent by three 'socialist societies': the British Socialist Society, the ILP and the Fabian Society. The 98 per cent had no great enthusiasm for the Webbs' proposals, but they allowed them to be added to Labour's constitution because they were so innocuous.

Thus Clause IV (4) talks not of 'nationalisation', or even its modern counterpart, 'social ownership', but 'common ownership': a concept that nobody has ever properly defined. It refers not to state planning or workers' control but to 'popular administration' — again, a term that defies serious ideological analysis. And it softens even that with the qualification, 'the best obtainable system', which rather implies that paradise is always liable to be postponed in favour of short-term expediency.

Likewise with equality: all that Clause IV (4) offers the working class is the meaningless formula: 'the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible'. It would be going too far to suggest that this clause could be adopted by the Tories, but there is nothing in it that would cause any great discomfort to the SDP or the Liberals.

Clause IV (4) does a number of things. It provides a worthy form of words to print on party membership cards. It gives members a vague sense of comradeship. It gives activists a reason to call the party 'socialist'. It provides a stick with which the left can beat the leadership. It does *not* create any coherent ideological framework within which the party can win converts and change the world.

Myth two: 1945 proved that socialism is a vote-winner. In fact, Clement Attlee kept socialist fervour firmly in check, both during the 1945 campaign and afterwards. True, Labour's manifesto, *Let us face the future*, said that 'Labour will plan from the ground up'; but this was followed by a comma rather than a full stop. After the comma came these words: '. . . giving an appropriate place to contructive enterprise and private endeavour in the national plan'. If ever there was a loophole as big as Traitors' Gate it was that 'appropriate place': as elastic a phrase as you will find in politics.

> **Labour's fundamental handicap is that it has no basic, agreed or understood purpose**

Labour's 1945 manifesto did foreshadow a programme of nationalisation. But, in the light of the party's subsequent history, the contemporary verdict of the authors of the 1945 Nuffield election study is worth recalling:

> [Labour] put forward the suggestion of nationalisation as an economic remedy for an economic malady, rather than as a political end. They desired it because they believed that it would be conducive to industrial efficiency, and not because they attached any virtue to public ownership as such. They suggested nationalising several selected industries only. Each of these was chosen for reasons peculiar to itself.

Policies in other areas were certainly radical — such as the formation of the National Health Service. But this radicalism was largely the product of Britain's wartime experience. In 1945 Labour was in touch with the popular mood; the Tories were not. When the Tories recovered their nerve and their sense of what voters wanted, they decided to leave almost all of Labour's reforms untouched. Had Attlee's government been truly socialist, it is difficult to imagine the 13 years of Conservative rule that started in 1951 making so little progress at undoing his work.

Myth three: The Labour Party is just one part of a wider radical movement, of which the most important section comprises the trade unions. The bit about the trade unions is true, although less than it was: in 1979, 27 per cent of electors belonged to unions; now 22 per cent do. The fallacy is that the unions have historically performed a radicalising role.

It is a myth of recent origin. In the 1950s nobody would have accused the unions of trying to drag Labour to the left. They were largely instrumental in keeping Labour to the right, and paid scant regard to their memberships in making deals in smoke-filled rooms. The unions broke most decisively with the party leadership in the late 1960s when they opposed Harold Wilson's incomes policy. Which side was more to the left remains a moot point: it depends whether you regard pay policies as helping the bosses or the low-paid. (If you think they perform both functions, then the ideological confusion is even greater.)

What is not in doubt is that some of the greatest opposition to pay policies has come from craft unions who want not only to take the greatest amount of money from their employers, but also want to maximise their differentials against lower-paid workers.

Myth four: There used to be an electoral coalition for socialist change that was sufficient to elect Labour to power. Labour's task now is to reconstruct that coalition. There are two problems with this argument. The first concerns the nature of the coalition that elected Labour to power with large majorities in 1945 and 1966; the second concerns Labour's capacity to reconstruct it.

The essential point about the public attitudes that underpinned Labour's big victories was that they were instrumental rather than ideological. That is, they were concerned with electing governments that would tackle identifiable problems. In 1945 those issues were housing, health and demobilisation. In 1966 they were more diffuse, with Wilson concentrating on looking modern ('white heat of technology') and capable ('you know Labour government works').

Is it, then, possible to recreate the old coalition of 'instrumental' radical voters, even if we discount the theory that Labour was swept to power by 'ideological' radical voters? Sadly, no. As the Heath, Jowell & Curtice study* of the 1983 election shows, there has been a long-term decline in the number of rank-and-file manual workers — the historic bedrock of Labour's support. They and their dependants constituted 47 per cent of the electorate in 1964, but only 34 per cent in 1983. Extrapolating both backwards and forwards, Britain's manual working class comprised a clear majority in 1945, but are probably down to no more than 31-32 per cent today.

The basic problem about Labour and socialism boils down to this. Labour has never seriously been a socialist party, never fought an election on a socialist programme, never been part of a wider socialist movement and never been elected by socialist voters. That must be the starting point for the debate about the future of socialism. □

* *How Britain Votes*, Pergamon Press, £15.95 hb, £7.95 pb

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Gorbachev at an historic crossroads

The Soviet Union now bids, not for world domination, but for world peace and understanding. Can Mikhail Gorbachev sustain an act distrusted by conservatives to the left and right?* JEREMY LEGGETT, *a participant in the international peace forum, reports

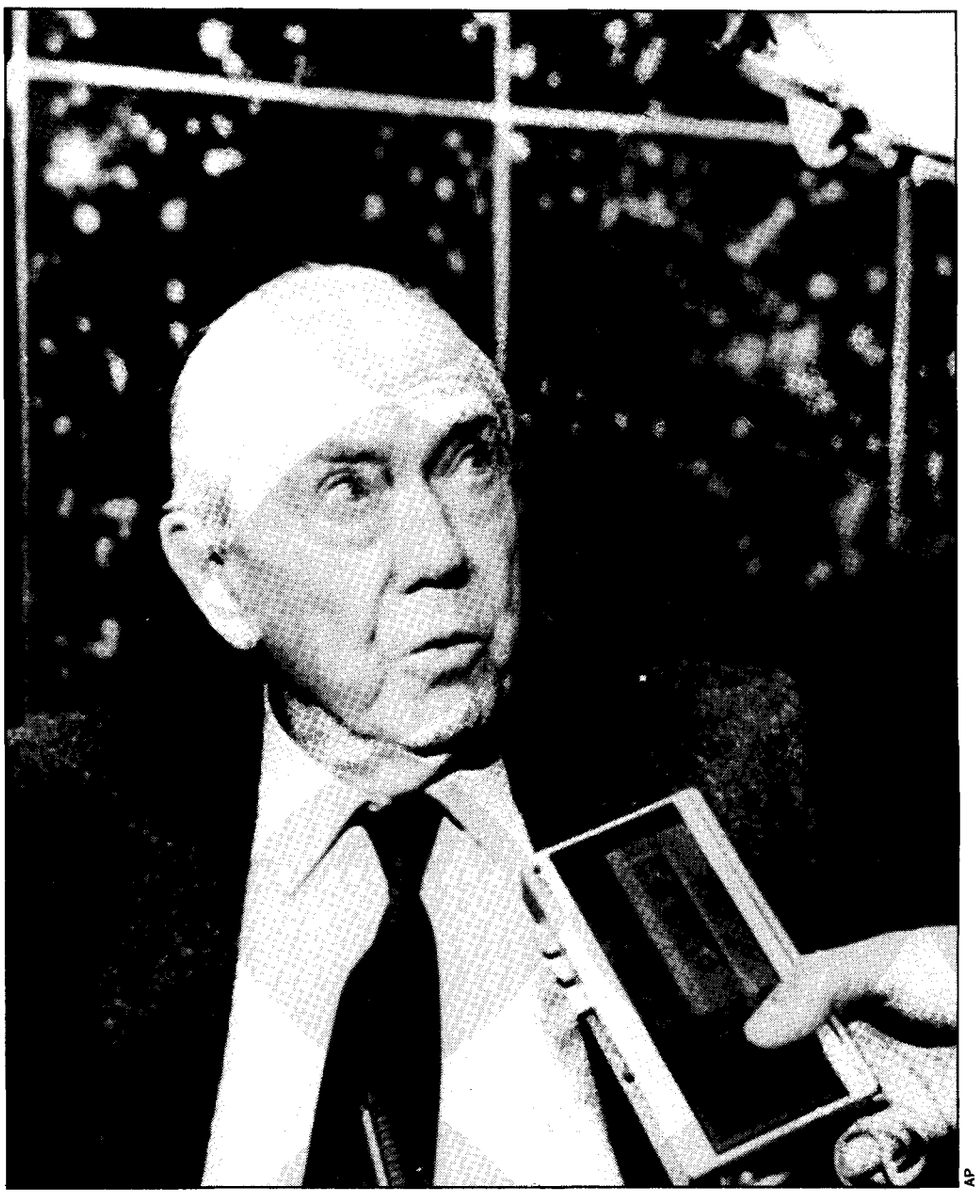
DEEP IN THE Kremlin I took my seat between a Canadian arms-control expert and the Archbishop of Smolensk. Seven rows forward sat Yoko Ono, and near to her — surrounded as usual by craning photographers — Academician Andrei Sakharov. A thousand scientists, writers, politicians, religious leaders, musicians and actors lined the simple wooden benches in the Parliament of the Supreme Soviet. Participants at a forum described by *The Times* as one of the most bizarre peace conferences ever, we awaited the appearance of Mikhail Gorbachev.

The photographers began to leave. I looked around the long hall. Further along my row John Kenneth Galbraith was looking pensively at the primitive coil of plastic through which our simultaneous translation was supposed to emerge. Two rows behind him sat a scientist who had spent half his life designing nuclear weapons at Los Alamos. Four rows back Gregory Peck gazed at the TV cameras festooning the balconies.

Elsewhere in the auditorium were a past American presidential science adviser, a host of other top American and Soviet scientists and — bravest person at the forum — Conservative MP Keith Best. Representing over 80 countries, most of us had come at the invitation — and expense — of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Ten men walked onto the podium. One of them was the Soviet leader. Gorbachev's Chief Scientific Adviser, Evgeni Velikhov, took the chair. Having successfully co-ordinated the clean-up operation at Chernobyl, Velikhov is on a rising curve. It was he who had convened the forum. The occasion, he said, was to mark a turning point in the quest for peaceful co-existence: a new regime of open collaboration between scientists in East and West. Priority tasks in this 'world laboratory', such as medical advice to the Third World and research into earthquake-prediction, would help engender the goodwill needed to bringing about disarmament.

Representatives of the individual symposia within the forum followed. Nobel Prize-winning Professor Bernard Lown, speaking for the physicians, described how a Soviet satellite will provide a worldwide link between laboratories in the developed world and health centres in the Third World. Princeton physicist Frank von Hippel, speaking for the scientists, spelt out the dangers of Star Wars, and told the seated Gorbachev: 'Increasing openness could be in the long run your greatest contribution to achieving peace'. Egon Bahr, German SPD spokesman on arms control, concluded, to applause: 'It is better to test Gorbachev than to test new bombs'.



AP

A wary and cynical Graham Greene, one of the 'useful fools' (*Telegraph*) at the forum

An Indian cleric described how 250 leaders from the world's six major religions had agreed on the need for inter-denominational unity in the face of the growing threat of nuclear war. Graham Greene, who would provide the headline for the next day's *Times*, spoke of the dissipation of traditional antipathy between Catholics and Communists ('Greene aligns Catholics with Kremlin' was how Rupert Murdoch's sub-editors rendered it). The representative of a round-table held by retired NATO and Warsaw Pact generals spoke of the need for new military thinking in the nuclear age.

Mikhail Gorbachev's turn came. He descended to the rostrum, and the applauding audience rose around me. Embarrassed, the Canadian arms-control expert and I stayed seated. 'I haven't heard what he has to say yet', muttered my companion-in-reserve. ▷

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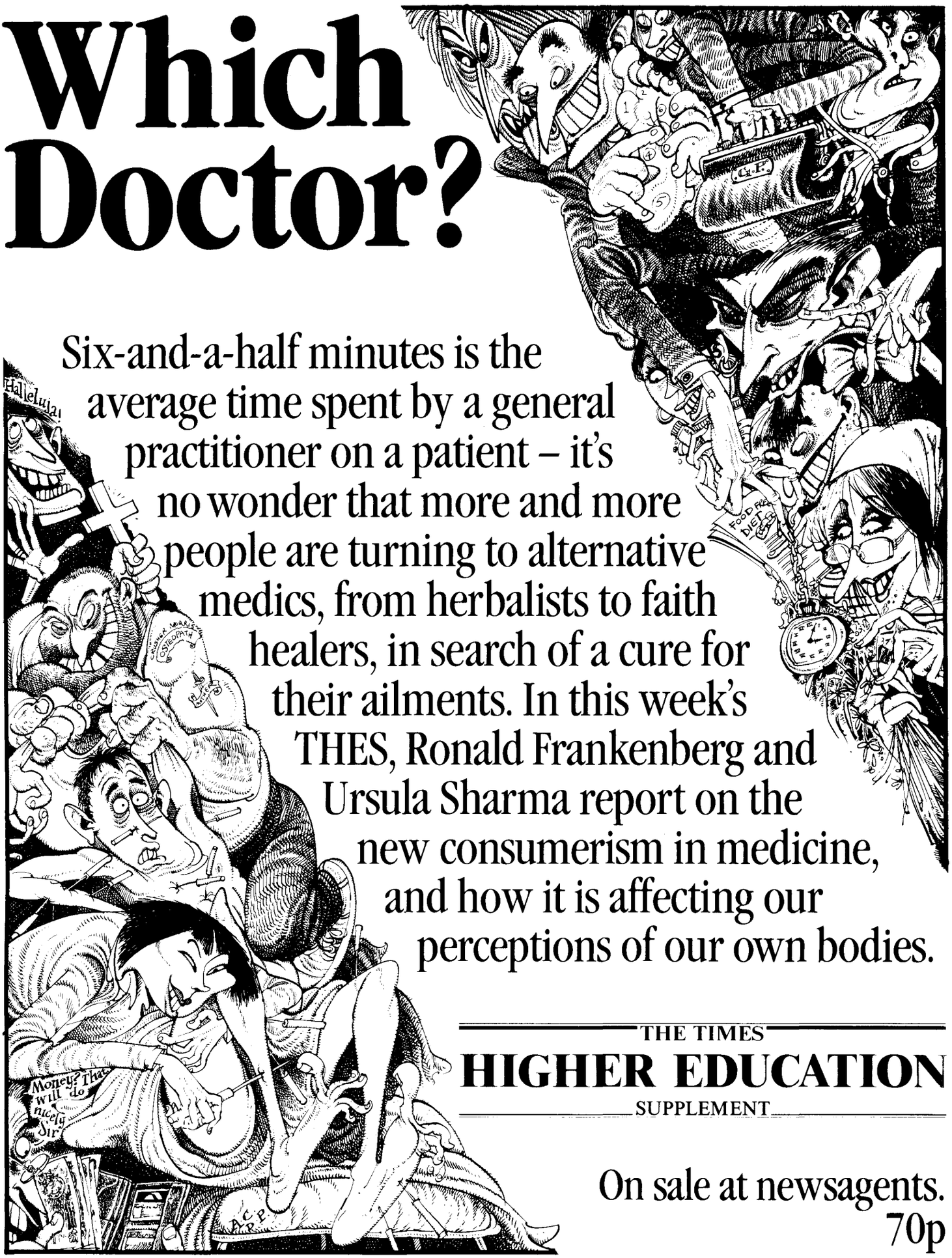
Which Doctor?



Six-and-a-half minutes is the average time spent by a general practitioner on a patient – it's no wonder that more and more people are turning to alternative medics, from herbalists to faith healers, in search of a cure for their ailments. In this week's THES, Ronald Frankenberg and Ursula Sharma report on the new consumerism in medicine, and how it is affecting our perceptions of our own bodies.

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Revolutionary changes

He began as we expected, with an elaboration on the theme that humanity is close to committing nuclear suicide. We had been immersing ourselves in this all week. 'There are dozens — I repeat dozens — of recorded and acknowledged moments when the possibility of using [nuclear] weapons against other countries was seriously considered.' A pause for effect. How many moments in this very building, I wondered, trying to decide what passionate indignation might sound like in Russian.

He quickly moved to *glasnost* (openness). 'You have arrived in the Soviet Union at a time when essentially revolutionary changes are under way here' . . . 'Before my people, before you, and before the whole world, I state with full responsibility that our international policy is more than ever determined by domestic policy, by our interest in concentrating on constructive endeavours to improve our country.' How? Means are to include '. . . new forms of civic activity and restoration of those which were unfairly forgotten. In brief, we want a broad democratisation of all society.' Sakharov was clapping his hands above his head, but I was too busy scribbling to see it.

The world could only gain from this '. . . invitation . . . to compete with socialism peacefully', could people but '. . . overcome mentality, stereotypes and dogmas inherited from a past never to return'. The Soviet leadership, said Gorbachev, had needed a long process of review '. . . before we saw things as they are and became convinced that new approaches and methods are required for resolving international problems in today's complex and contradictory world, a world at a crossroads.' Both the Canadian and I were joining in the clapping now.

HE MOVED to arms control: a reiteration of the 15 January 1985 proposals (to get rid of nuclear weapons by the year 2000), a reminder of the Soviet offers for large reductions in conventional forces, and for a total ban on chemical weapons. To Reykjavik. 'It was not a failure. It was a breakthrough': . . . 'when both sides agreed . . . to make deep cuts in their nuclear arsenals and then eliminate them entirely, they virtually recognised that nuclear weapons can no longer guarantee security.'

And so to the kernel of the speech: the stance on Star Wars, and the prospect of nuclear arms in space. 'If this happened the very idea of arms control would be compromised' . . . 'Destabilisation would become reality and be fraught with crisis. The risk of accidental outbreak of war would increase by several orders . . .'

Here he inserted a minor revelation: the American negotiators in Geneva had apparently already officially suggested legitimising the Reagan Administration's 'broad interpretation' of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which would allow testing of weapons based on 'new physical principles' in space. (Mrs Thatcher had been promised consultation before such a step.) Reagan, we were reminded, had pledged at the Geneva summit 'to prevent an arms race in space'. By so '. . . undermining the ABM Treaty, the US Administration scorns that pledge and the signature the United States put to that termless treaty fifteen years ago'. Deployment of weapons in space 'is to create a new instrument of blackmail against independent states. Isn't it time to enter into international law a ban on *any* weapons in space?'

So, on the issue which is likely to shape the course of arms control over the next two years, and possibly its very future, Gorbachev is in no mood to compromise. At Reykjavik he had insisted that research on ABM technology should be restricted to the laboratory. And so it stays.

He moved on to regional issues. 'Some leaders still view the world as their domain and declare their "vital interests" wherever they like.' Not so, apparently, the new Soviet Union. Six regiments have already been withdrawn from Afghanistan, and '. . . we shall pull out the whole of our military contingent within time limits as short as possible' . . . provided there is '. . . reciprocity on the part of the United States and Afghanistan's neighbours . . .'

He moved to his conclusion. Many of our generation, he regretted, '. . . have grown accustomed to nuclear weapons'. How to combat this? 'To "humanise" international relations, there have to be appropriate actions in the humanitarian field too, notably as regards information, human contacts, professional exchanges etc. That will help create moral guarantees for peace and hence contribute towards working out the material guarantees.' The forum, he said, was an example. He hoped that its ideas would spread wide, and help the world free itself of nuclear weapons for — his final worlds — '. . . the sake of the immortality of human civilisation'.

Over to us

It was a speech both heady and analytical. The man was as sincere and energetic in his manner of delivery as he had been attentive and responsive through the preceding speeches. The strength of his statements on internal reform took many aback. The Canadian and I joined his standing ovation.

And yet, as we shuffled our way through the ornate halls of the Kremlin — jet set and commoners, foreigners and Russians alike — to the lavish reception which followed, a certain disappointment welled. Many had expected him to use the occasion to propose a new arms-control initiative. Another extension of the moratorium on nuclear testing, perhaps, or a willingness in principle to stop work on the controversial radar at Krasnoyarsk if the US would backtrack on the Reykjavik impasse over SDI research. Or maybe a new proposal on linking conventional forces in with the nuclear-and-space process.

That we heard an elaborately argued statement-of-position, and no more, could well portend the position which Gorbachev will take on arms control in the two remaining years of the Reagan Administration. The principal factors which must be weighing on him are the influence of the conservatives in his own ranks, the yet-to-be resolved question of Irangate, and the role which the US Congress is able to assume in the arms-control field.

First, his internal opposition. That Gorbachev has outstripped his original 'mandate' seems clear. Kremlin-watchers suspect opposition at high levels in the KGB, and at all levels in the bureaucracy. On the Tuesday before the forum a Jewish dissident demonstration was allowed. But at a Thursday demonstration, where refuseniks hoped to capitalise on the media climate as the forum started, KGB thugs waded in. On Friday they did so again — in full view of the networks' camera crews. That same day Gorbachev gave a speech which pushed *glasnost* to new liberal limits: he told Soviet journalists that the forgotten pages of Soviet history must be reopened, and called for 'naming of the forgotten names'.

Nobody knows where Viktor Chebrikov, head of the KGB, stands on the reforms, or on arms control. The KGB, which nipped Khrushchev's reforms in the bud, is apparently the only organisation which Gorbachev has yet to criticise.

AND WHAT OF Reagan and SDI? The sophisticated America-watchers in Gorbachev's premier think tank (the Institute of US and Canada Studies) are aware that the President could yet end up dead-in-the-water. But will SDI go with him?

Gorbachev will be aware that there is a fudge available on SDI which, in theory, might bring Reagan back to the negotiating table, and still leave the US hawks with little chance of carving out a future for wholesale ballistic missile defence. It is through agreeing in principle to tests of new technologies in space within strict quantitative limits. If he *could* accommodate a fudge, much of the Reykjavik package should be there for the taking: an agreement to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear weapons (INF) in Europe, a deep cut — 50 per cent or more — in strategic ballistic missiles, a chemical weapons ban, and a quota or low-yield test ban. Once at last begun, the process of disarmament might accelerate following such early successes.

But could he sell a fudge in the Kremlin? He does not have an entirely free hand: his arms-control package will be the product of a series of internal politburo trade-offs. The solidity of his opposition to SDI thus far suggests that fear of it reaches deep in the Soviet military. The technological gap between the US and Soviet military will undoubtedly be widened, in a number of areas, as a result of $3.5 billion per annum (1987 prices) of SDI research, and the worst-case analysts fear that a large SDI system will contribute to a US first-strike capability. Marshal Akhromeyev, the present Chief-of-Staff, was there at Gorbachev's side in Reykjavik.

Even supposing the Kremlin could live with an accommodation on SDI, would it be wise to make concessions now, to a President who is facing a future as a lame duck, or worse?

Then there is Congress. Increasingly it looks likely that a motion to cut off funding for all but the tiniest American nuclear tests, passed overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives pre-Reykjavik, will be resurrected and, critically, also viewed favourably by the new Senate. Other legislation on arms control is in the offing. The deeper the Irangate crisis becomes, the more the Congress will be encouraged to force the President's hand on arms control.

So Gorbachev probably has least to lose now by sticking, by consolidating his position, and by continuing to play the card he does so well — the propaganda one. The arms-control ball is now in

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NATO's court. Knowing the entrenched positions in Washington and London contributed to the disappointment over his speech.

Useful fools

In many quarters of the Establishment press we were dupes, scientists and film stars alike: 'peaceniks' (*Independent*), 'political sillies', 'useful fools', 'ninnies', 'glitterati', 'call-girls' (all *Daily Telegraph*).

These were the knee-jerks of those who had not done their research, and who find difficulty seeing beyond 'monolithic tyranny'. A British Moscow correspondent, whose treatment was more even — though he was still smarting from the bruises the KGB had given him on Thursday — asked me if I and the other scientists felt we had been used for propaganda purposes. The answer is clear: yes and no.

In the closed scientists' sessions, more than 200 foreigners swapped arguments with some 50 Soviets. True, there was unity on the dangers of Star Wars, and much back-slapping over the test moratorium. But a succession of speakers argued for greater behind-the-scenes action from the Soviets on the verifiability of prospective treaties. On nuclear testing: provision of data which are openly available in the West, and which would greatly clarify the debate over verifiability of a Comprehensive nuclear Test Ban Treaty. On the moratorium: explicit condemnations of any resumption of testing just as the Congress begins to look like acting unilaterally. On the independent monitoring project set up by the American Natural Resources Defence Council (as of July 1985, around the Soviet test site in Kazakhstan): frank statements of the scorn which the Soviets would incur if they turn off the monitoring instruments, should they resume testing.

Andrei Sakharov spoke three times from the floor. He seemed in touch, and uninhibited. He was not complimentary. One of his suggestions would prove seminal, if acted on. Star Wars, he said, is fated to die its own death in the United States as an impractical nonsense. Arms control and disarmament should not be held up on account of it: General Secretary Gorbachev should decouple SDI from his package, and go at once for deals on both INF *and* strategic weapons. This was visibly not what certain of the academicians wished to hear. But eminent western scientists, on the floor and in the corridors, supported him.

Evgeni Velikhov sat quietly in the audience throughout. He regularly has Gorbachev's ear. Such frankness from western scientists will find its way to higher places. Who knows — and this is what we hope — it might even provide a lever for use against the Kremlin's conservatives.

If the plenary sessions were for testing the temperature of the waters, the two expert workshops — on nuclear testing and the ABM Treaty — were for providing specific suggestions. A paper by one of America's top space experts proposed means of tightening rules on anti-ballistic missile research. An agreed statement based on it, negotiated by the top four western experts and four Soviets, including a serving General, is to be despatched to the Geneva negotiations. This was not the work of useful fools. □

There *is* an alternative (reading)

As the Soviet leadership reaches for the moral high ground, the White House tries to 'abolish the last 14 years of mutual understanding' with the Soviet Union by pursuing Star Wars.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

reports

Washington

I HAD NEVER met George Younger before his visit to Washington last week, and so had every chance to be impressed by his amiable credulity. He is the sort of minister who is conjured from the daydreams of chiefs of staff and civil servants — friendly, incurious, gullible and loyal. He had, he told those of us assembled in the British ambassador's residence, been assured that consultation — yes, consultation, that's the word — would precede any change in current American nuclear deployment. It seemed natural to ask whether, in that case, he had been 'consulted' about the latest such change.

AP

Gore Vidal betraying his President in Moscow

Well, of course, this was not a change in policy but in interpretation. The interpretation of the ABM treaty was not a matter for Britain, but for the signatories. By the same token, the minister added without waiting to be asked, the British government supported research into Star Wars technology but had not, as yet, given its imprimatur to development. Granted the self-denial with which Mr Younger approached the entire subject, it was a wonder that he had even been asked his opinion about research.

As a matter of ascertainable fact, of the kind that is available to everyone in Washington and apparently to nobody in Whitehall, there is no distinction of any kind between policy and interpretation, or between research and development. It is apparent to the meanest intelligence (and here I intend no particular disrespect) that by suddenly changing its interpretation of the ABM treaty, the Reagan Administration has signified a change in its policy towards arms control. And, by pressing ahead with research into the technology of stratospheric war, it has no less clearly indicated an intention to develop the capacity for it. All else is casuistry.

A few months ago, I arranged a small luncheon for Lady Olga Maitland. She had arrived in Washington in order to warn the Reaganites of the danger of Kinnockite unilateralism, but it so chanced that she timed her visit to coincide with the official denunciation of the SALT II treaty. 'We're not wild about scrapping SALT II' she told me, 'but I'm quite sure you are wrong about the cancellation of the ABM agreement.' No breathless peacenik in Moscow could have been more naive.

REAGAN'S UNILATERALISM easily eclipses Kinnock's. There is now clear evidence that the White House and the Defense Department plan to destroy the key provisions of the ABM treaty before the present lame-duck incumbent quits office. The ABM treaty is the last remaining restraint on the pursuit of nuclear superiority and on the deadly manoeuvring for a first strike. The sudden move to abolish the last 14 years' worth of mutual understanding, and to do so both unilaterally and retrospectively, deserves a tougher analysis than it is likely to get from Mr Younger.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, which was signed by Richard Nixon and ratified by the Senate on 3 August 1972, explicitly forbids the testing of what are now known as 'kinetic kill vehicles'. It is thus incompatible with SDI or 'Star Wars', and has been accepted as such by all legal, constitutional and military experts ever since. This plain fact has necessitated the introduction of alternative 'readings' by the Reagan Administration. In this bizarre world of thermonuclear semiotics, there are two available constructions and interpretations. The first is the one that Nixon signed, that the Senate debated and that the arms negotiators have accepted ever since. The second is the one now proposed by the loophole-artists in the Pentagon.

For the first reading we may consult Harold Brown, the former Secretary of Defense and a

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member of the original ABM negotiating team. He states quite clearly that when he was in charge, the treaty was understood to ban all realistic testing of technologies that might have been available when the treaty was signed. It was thus, in 1972 terms, the stratospheric equivalent of a freeze. Rockets of the kind now proposed under the SDI umbrella were investigated more than a decade ago, said Mr Brown, and were cancelled because among other things they violated the agreement and they did not work. (The name of the decade-old programme, incidentally, was 'Bambi'. Someone must be paid a lot just to think up these code-names.)

For the second reading we may consult Mr George Shultz, who on 11 February said that 'we don't think any further negotiations are necessary' with the USSR and that the Reagan Administration can now proceed to interpret the ABM treaty in the light of 'what we think it says'. You couldn't have it more plainly than that, unless you were Lewis Carroll.

For a final reading we can go to Sam Nunn, the reactionary Georgian who sits as the Dixiecraft chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. In an unusual departure, Nunn warned the President that any monkeying with the treaty could lead to a 'constitutional confrontation'. This was because the Senate had ratified the treaty after long debate, and had done so on certain understandings which no President could unilaterally delete.

THE PROPONENTS of the second reading, who call it the 'broad' or the 'permissive' reading, are in a hurry. They realise that they have only two years in which to make Star Wars an irreversible fact. If they can blur the distinctions of interpretation, and if they can further blur the distinction between 'research' and 'development', then they can start the laboratories and production lines rolling without a vote. This in turn would mean that an incoming president would find the process hard to arrest. Instead of stopping a weapon system in its infancy, he would be, so to speak, 'disarming'. This would be to defy the logic of the arms race and also the logic of military keynesianism, whereby the Defense Department is a vast provider of employment and technology. No President has ever successfully done both.

In a recent meeting on the SDI at the White House, Attorney General Edwin Meese said quite openly that the need was to get the programme irreversibly under way. This also explains the refusal of the United States to join in any test ban, whether verifiable or otherwise. Mr Meese will have a lot of other explaining to do this week, when the report of the Tower Commission is published at last.

But it is wrong to think that the Reagan team are too preoccupied with the Iran-Nicaragua scandal to pursue their dream of nuclear superiority. After all, if a space-based laser can knock down a Russian missile as it leaves its silo, it can destroy it while it is still *in* its silo. The Russians can see this if the Reaganites can't, which is why the ABM treaty was signed in the first place.

Mr Younger, of course, echoed the White House in saying the Russians are researching the same technology. I had to ask him why, if the Russians already have the know-how, President Reagan is offering to share it with them. □

Three seats short

Fianna Fail's failure to win an overall majority in the Dail means that, for the first time, a left/right division may emerge to supersede the civil war divisions which have dominated Irish politics since the foundation of the state. **PATRICK O'GORMAN** ***reports***

Dublin

CHARLES HAUGHEY finds himself three seats short of an overall majority — just as he did in 1982. But following that election, it was in the gift of a small group of mainly socialist deputies to choose between Fianna Fail or a Fine Gael/Labour coalition for government. This time no such choice exists, due to the serious ideological rift between Labour and Fine Gael that brought down the last government — and due, too, to the fragmented nature generally of the opposition to Haughey in the Dail following the emergence of the Progressive Democrats.

Haughey can now be the only candidate capable of being elected Taoiseach when the Dail meets on 10 March. This time he says there will be no deals with independents: he intends to run a minority government, presumably until such time as he is forced, or judges it opportune, to call a further election.

Haughey's go-it-alone policy challenges the parties of the right, Fine Gael and the PDS, to support him in tackling the country's enormous economic problems. Fianna Fail has already said that it will implement 90 per cent of the Fine Gael budget proposals. It would likewise be incumbent upon the PDS, only recently split from Fianna Fail, not to bring the government down over unpopular measures when they themselves have been the most trenchant opponents of excessive public sector spending. (The PD leader, Des O'Malley, once described himself as a Tory in the Ted Heath mould — a description that was startling not so much because of where it placed O'Malley on a left-right spectrum, but rather because it has always been so unusual for an Irish politician to be prepared to describe himself in such clear class terms.)

The parties of the right, if they are to collectively give Haughey his chance, will have to swallow not just their 60-year-old differences but their more recent quarrels as well. If Haughey were to damage the Anglo-Irish Agreement he would be opposed strongly by Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats. The issue that led to Des O'Malley's final expulsion from Fianna Fail and the launching of the PDS was O'Malley's support for the Hillsborough accord.

Haughey has paid dearly for O'Malley's expulsion: it has been the effect of the PD vote that has left Fianna Fail in a minority position in the Dail. But it seems increasingly less likely that Haughey will do anything to undermine the Agreement. Nationalist opinion generally is that Hillsborough represents a substantial gain at the expense of the Unionists, and Haughey would not be thanked for jeopardising the Agreement because of a purist attitude towards Article 1 — which says that change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland can only come about with the consent of the Northern majority.

British Labour Party spokesperson Peter Archer put it succinctly in a revealing phrase when he said that Haughey should not sacrifice the substance of the Agreement because he did not like the shadow.

And even Neil Blaney, the independent Fianna Fail member who all along had remained the most uncompromising Republican in Dail Eireann, has changed his line. He had said that he would not support Haughey for Taoiseach so long as Article 1 remained in the agreement; now, like everybody else, Blaney is talking about the economy.

NOR DOES it seem that serious differences will arise between right wing parties on social issues. Haughey's opposition to divorce was one of the factors that gave rise to the birth of the PDS, but the comprehensive referendum defeat on the divorce issue meant that the PDS and Fine Gael are unlikely to challenge Fianna Fail's more conservative approach on social policies. And as Irish culture recovers from the disorienting effect of the temporary Papal experiment that was Vatican II, Haughey's conservative attitude would seem to fit in well with the mood of the country at large.

The left is looking for some kind of consensus. The Labour Party has itself moved leftwards — judging by the statements of its new members and it has improved its standing with other left-wing groups, by demonstrating its readiness to bring the last government down rather than agree to expenditure cuts.

The Workers Party (formerly Official Sinn Fein) have said they favour the idea of a left alliance, as have the two other socialist deputies. But differences among the left with regard to the national question run a lot deeper than among parties of the right. Dublin independent Tony Gregory is Nationalist in outlook and declares himself to have been strongly influenced by the late Seamus Costello, founder of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

The Democratic Socialist Party leader Jim Kemmy has taken a directly opposite view since the outbreak of the war in Northern Ireland, opposing not just the provisionals' campaign but the whole basis of the Nationalist approach to Northern Ireland. Kemmy holds the territorial demand over the North and the demand for a British withdrawal to be fundamentally undemocratic.

Kemmy's approach was highly unusual in the early '70s — but it has since gained currency on the left. Official Sinn Fein, transformed into the Workers Party, has said that northern policy would be their main difference with Gregory and they expect Kemmy to share this view with them. □

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The cost of Zircon

A 'get-out' clause now supposedly allows the government to keep Parliament in the dark about projects like Zircon.* DUNCAN CAMPBELL *explains why the get-out doesn't work

ONE MONTH AGO, the *New Statesman* published the controversial article on Project Zircon. Although the *NS* report has since been misrepresented as the gratuitous 'blowing' of an important secret, its central thrust was the disclosure of the deliberate deception of Parliament, for four years, about plans for a major defence project. Under a 1982 agreement, such plans have to be disclosed, at least to the Public Accounts Cimmittee (PAC), composed of MPs from all parties.

The facts of our investigation have been obscured by two factors. One concealing factor is the government's national security smokescreen, and the rumpus that that has created. The second concealing factor has been the conduct of some senior MPs, notably Robert Shelton, Chair of the PAC, who have seemed more concerned to distance themselves from the row than to stand up for the rights and privileges of Parliament.

In bringing the Zircon affair to public attention, we had to prove three separate points:

1. That Project Zircon, to build a spy satellite, actually existed;
2. That it had not been notified to Parliament in the manner required for major defence projects;
3. That it fell within a category of cost, and was at a stage of progress, which it was obligatory to notify to Parliament.

Point 1: does Zircon exist? Zircon is officially acknowledged to be what we said it was — a spy satellite for GCHQ, for which the Ministry of Defence has to pay. That, after all, is what the fuss has been about — and if it is *not* now fully intended that Zircon should go into orbit, then the whole security row has been a charade.

But a great deal of disinformation has been planted about its current status, too. As soon as news of Zircon broke, on 20 January, the Defence Ministry line was that Zircon 'is at a very preliminary stage. No decision has been taken on whether the project will continue beyond its present exploratory phase.' An MoD press officer added that 'the phrase exploratory means we could not really be in the business of contracts.' Some 'Whitehall sources' even suggested, two weeks later, that Zircon had been cancelled.

Professed official uncertainty about an 'experimental' project stands in dramatic contrast to the fervour of the government's denunciation of 'traitors' who have allegedly leaked the precious Zircon secret. But there is nothing 'preliminary' or 'experimental' about Zircon — save that every satellite is preliminary and indeed exr ..ental until a rocket has safely taken it in orbit around the earth.

Official approval to go ahead with Project Zircon was given during 1983. The 'orbital slot' for a Skynet satellite over the Indian Ocean — Zircon's cover story — was openly registered internationally on 27 September 1983. That's when the Russians found out. In the autumn of 1984 — according to the *Sunday Times* — at least a hundred engineers began work at a gigantic, high security, windowless new building at Marconi's Portsmouth factory. The *Independent* newspaper has also published a picture of a second Zircon construction site, a newly refurbished 10,000-square-metre spacecraft assembly area t Filton, near Bristol. News of this extensive new classified satellite construction programme had, unsurprisingly, leaked to an industry newsletter, *Interspace*, by February 1985, and the Russians read that too. Finally, in April 1985, British Aerospace announced the award of a contract to build the new 'Skynet' satellite — but carefully didn't say how much it was worth.

Rather more convincing than 'Whitehall sources' dissembling in the press is the evidence of the sworn affidavit of Sir Peter Marychurch, Director of GCHQ, which was used last month to get an injunction against me. Marychurch says that 'a substantial part of the information about the project [in the BBC programme] is correct'. 'Serious damage', he alleged, would be caused 'by revealing the existence of the project'. This would not be true if Zircon may really never be launched.

Point 2: had Parliament been told? Robert Sheldon, in the House of Commons on 27 January, stated that, prior to his interview with me on 7 October 1986, he 'had no prior knowledge of the project'. Naturally, no one else in Parliament knew about Zircon either (except for Ministers). Zircon was secret from Parliament, until the BBC told them about it.

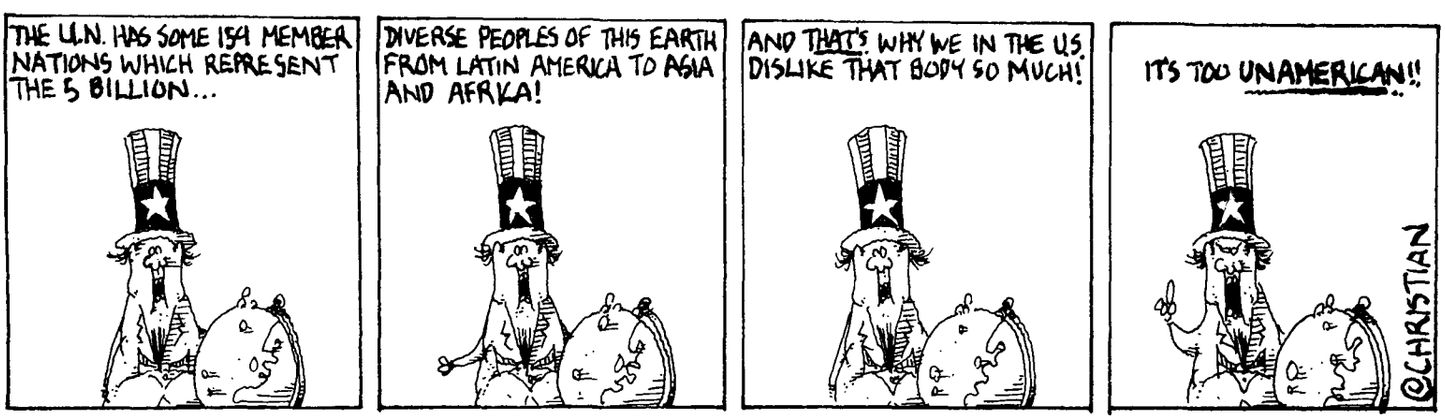
Point 3: should Parliament have been told? The formal criteria which determine when information about a major defence project should be passed to the Public Accounts Committee is loosely called the 'Chevaline' agreement, drawn up in 1982 after a decade in which Parliament had not been informed of the huge cost overruns of the 'Chevaline', or Polaris modernisation programme. The information comes to the PAC in the form of an annual Major Projects Statement. There are two criteria for inclusion in the Statement:

> (a) Projects for which the Treasury have authorised expenditure in excess of £200 million;
> (b) Projects expected to exceed the £200 million threshold are included when expenditure on project definition has reached £10 million [even though authorisation for the full amount may not have been given].

The £200 million 'threshold' (it was raised to £250m in June 1986, but the £200m figure has been applicable to Zircon for most of its development) is the *lifetime* cost of the project, once (and if) it is completed. Neither the PAC nor any official body disputes that, when completed, Zircon will have cost far more than £200m. According to two independent Defence Ministry sources, Zircon will cost about £400-500 million. It is quite irrelevant to say, as government sources did at the beginning of the Zircon row, that 'nothing like the sums quoted' have been spent. *Lifetime costs are the issue.*

I have offered to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, whereby they could confirm what the actual costs of Zircon are, and where they have been concealed. As yet, I have had no answer from the Committee.

The only official statement which has appeared to cast any doubt on the total cost of Zircon was made by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, in January. He then said that 'there was no commitment to a major project by defence standards' (i.e. one costing more than the threshold). Some commentators have read this to imply that Zircon, even if it went ahead, would not be a major project. But all Downey's statement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says is that he believes Zircon still to be in the uncommitted 'project definition' phase.

If the costs of a project may cross the threshold, then the next question to ask is whether Treasury approval has been given. The MoD says that Treasury approval has *not* been given. We understand that this is true. But the Treasury *never* approves such secret intelligence projects anyway; approval comes instead from the Cabinet Office and the Permanent Secretaries Committee on the Intelligence Services (PSIS). The money is then reinserted inside Departmental budgets. The Treasury's views at that point are irrelevant. We believe that PSIS approval *has* been given for more than £200m to be spent on Zircon.

'Whitehall sources'

But even if full PSIS approval hasn't been given, Zircon still falls into the normal Major Project Statement criteria because more than £10 million has been spent on its project definition and development phases. The exact sum spent so far on Zircon is secret — but the better-informed 'Whitehall sources' appear to place it at about £70 million. No one, including the Defence Ministry and Robert Sheldon, dispute that far more than £10 million has been spent on project definition. Consequently (and this is not disputed by the MoD either), Zircon *does* fall into the normal Major Project Statement criteria, by one definition, or the other.

The MoD, however, claims that there's a special 'get-out clause' whereby highly classified major projects are not notified to the PAC in the normal way. In a Parliamentary Answer to Ann Clwyd MP on 2 February, Defence Minister Archie Hamilton claimed that projects could be excluded from the Major Project Statement on 'grounds of national security'. Hamilton said that:

> In the case of a project which is excluded from the Major Project Statement on ground of national security, the National Audit Office would be informed by the time when, but for national security considerations, the project would have been included in the Statement for the first time; and would have continuing access to the relevant papers. It would then be for the Comptroller and Auditor General to decide when to inform the Chairman of the PAC.

If true, this means that if a Department regards a project as particularly sensitive, they can drop it from the Statement. They then keep the National Audit Office fully informed (and there is no dispute that the NAO *has* been kept informed about Zircon). Then they can pass the buck on to Sir Gordon Downey, as to whether or not to pass the information on to anyone on the PAC.

Downey would decide whether or not to pass the information on based on what the MoD (or, in this case, GCHQ) told him about the sensitivity of the project. And GCHQ or the MoD can ask him, as they did four years ago with Zircon, not to inform the PAC or even the Chair, about the existence of a Major Project. Even by then, Zircon should probably have appeared in the Major Projects Statement.

Can Zircon 'get out'?

The 'get-out clause' procedure, if it were valid, would annul the spirit and the letter of the Chevaline agreement. What would have happened with Zircon is *exactly* what happened with Chevaline. Almost a billion pounds had been spent by the time that Parliament heard about it in 1980, ten years after it begun. The Comptroller was fully informed about Chevaline throughout the whole affair. But he didn't tell the PAC or any other Select Committee about it.

More importantly, no one had ever heard of this 'get-out clause' prior to 20 January 1987, when it was plucked out of thin air in order to explain the non-disclosure of Zircon to Parliament. (It *is* supposed to be justified by a 1982 Note, of which more later). During 1986, in interviews with the BBC/*Secret Society* team, each major person and organisation involved in the Chevaline agreement denied that such a clause could even exist.

Sir Frank Cooper, the former Defence Permanent Secretary, made the Chevaline agreement with former PAC chair Lord Barnett. Both he and Barnett denied the existence of such a clause. In the context of Project Zircon, I asked Sir Frank if it was right 'that the Public Accounts Committee is supposed, after the Chevaline row, to be informed of the costs, confidentially if need be, of *all* major defence projects?' Sir Frank said 'Yes'. He did not qualify his answer.

> **Campbell:** Was the system working when you left?
> **Cooper:** Yes.
> **Campbell:** It's been put to me that the Ministry of Defence sticking to its agreements is one thing, and that they do — but GCHQ is quite another [matter . . .].
> **Cooper:** As far as the Ministry of Defence is concerned I think there was a perfectly clear agreement.

At a meeting in July 1986, Lord Barnett also told us that there was no exemption for 'national security' projects. *He pointed out that such an exemption simply could not exist, since the whole purpose of the Chevaline agreement was to deal with the problem of very highly classified projects being concealed from Parliament.*

Without naming the secret project which I believed flouted the Chevaline agreement, I then asked Lord Barnett to appear on the Zircon programme. Barnett agreed to view our evidence for the secret project, then comment on it in a filmed interview. But four days later, to his surprise, he was appointed Deputy Chair of the BBC Governors, and had to withdraw.

On 17 April last year, the Defence Ministry's own press office told us that the Major Projects Statement covered 'everything'. What about national security projects? we asked. The spokesman pointed out that 'all parliamentary committees can receive classified information to conduct their work'.

Last October, researcher Jolyon Jenkins interviewed a very experienced former Clerk to the Public Accounts Committee, who had overseen the operation of the Chevaline agreement. He told us that 'there was no get-out clause at all'.

> **Jenkins:** Not even if there were grounds of national security?
> **Clerk:** No, because the whole Chevaline thing was about national security and not being sufficient ground for withholding information from the committee. If there was a project over £200 million . . . they would jolly well tell us.

Another witness is Allan Rogers MP, a member of the PAC for the last four years. He told us this month that he'd never heard of a national security get-out clause — until the Zircon scandal began.

The buck slides

Finally, there is the evidence of Robert Sheldon himself, the Chair of the PAC. During the BBC interview, I asked him if the Defence Ministry were allowed to leave 'anything *at all* off the list *(the Major Projects Statement)*':

> **Sheldon:** No, no, we make sure that everything is on that list. And I, through repeated assertions, make sure that is so.
> **Campbell:** And you've been quite certain that that message has got through.
> **Sheldon:** Oh, indeed I have.

He was then asked about Zircon. I told him that it was a GCHQ intelligence satellite, and almost certainly the most highly classified major British government project of the 1980s. I told him what it cost, then asked 'If our information is right, would that be a breach of the rules that the Ministry of Defence had agreed to abide by?' Sheldon replied:

> Certainly we would expect any project over two hundred and fifty million pounds to be brought to our notice . . . I stand by the whole purpose of the major projects statement, that anything costing more than two fifty million pounds, over its life, would be brought to our committee.
>
> And if this hasn't been done, obviously this would be a most serious matter . . . This is a matter to which I would give very serious consideration indeed, in view of the assurances that we've been given in the past.

It could not be more plain that during 1986, every party concerned with the Chevaline agreement, other than the Sir Gordon Downey (whom we did not then approach), firmly refuted the whole idea of the 'get-out clause'. Such a clause, if it existed, would defeat the letter and spirit of the agreement.

Sheldon has now adopted the government position — and says there *is* a get-out clause. In a wholesale turnabout from his October interview, he told MP Ann Clwyd on 26 January that 'projects may be omitted from [the Major Projects] list on grounds of national security'.

Value for money?

The 'get-out clause', on which the Defence Ministry relies for hiding Zircon from Parliament, appears in a Note to the PAC written in 1982 by Sir Gordon Downey. The Note is part of the PAC's report on Chevaline, and is headed 'Reports on Value for Money Studies'. Paragraph 12 reads:

> It is possible to envisage circumstances in which a Government Department might argue that some other important information should not be reported to Parliament by the Comptroller and Auditor General, or even disclosed to the PAC, on the grounds that to do so would be damaging to the national interest. In such circumstances, it is likely that the C&AG would wish to consult the Chairman of the PAC about the handling of such material . . .

Before we interviewed Robert Sheldon in October 1986, Jolyon Jenkins had spotted that someone might try to use this very clause as a loophole. So he raised his anxieties with the former PAC clerk, who told him that 'I'm not as suspicious as you . . . I didn't read anything like that into it'. Before

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interviewing Sheldon, I told him that the major purpose of the interview was because we were worried that there might indeed be a get-out clause. But Sheldon was wholly unequivocal; he was absolutely certain, throughout the filmed interview, that there were no get-outs.

On one interpretation, Sheldon's present embarrassment can be blamed almost entirely on Sir Gordon Downey. It was Downey who later drew Clause 12 to Sheldon's attention, and who has since briefed journalists that it *is* a get-out clause. It was also Downey who wrote in 1982 that it was 'likely' that he would 'wish to consult the Chairman of the PAC' about things like Zircon. Then he was told about Zircon in 1983, and still hadn't got round to mentioning it to Sheldon four years later. When, one wonders, was Sir Gordon Downey going to decide that the time was ripe to tell the PAC about Zircon?

But Downey's get-out clause is a legalism. As interpreted, it flies in the face of the whole purpose and spirit of the Chevaline agreement. It completely defeats parliamentary accountability, so far as sensitive projects like Chevaline and Zircon are concerned. *And it conflicts totally with what all the parties involved believe (as we quote them above) to be the spirit and effect of the Major Projects Statement.*

Nor does Downey's get-out clause even begin to appear valid in orthodox drafting terms. When he submitted his Note to the PAC, the Major Projects Statement did not exist — it was set up following the report of which it forms part. The title and content of the Note show it to be concerned with a quite different subject. It is entitled 'Report on Value For Money (VFM) studies', and it 'concentrates on VFM examinations or projects and programmes', Later, Downey says that 'This paper is mainly a statement of practice *as it has evolved so far* (our italics) . . . I would in due course expect to report more comprehensively on those . . . main systems of financial control which I intend in future to undertake.'

Downey now points out that the PAC, in the same report, did 'endorse' what he said. But Downey himself goes on in the Note to recommend that the PAC should make new rules such that they should be given the annual statement ('with whatever classification is needed') of the expenditure on major defence projects. This, he said, 'would place the onus on accountability where it belongs'.

Who to believe

Parliament will have to decide whom it wishes to believe about the Chevaline agreement. They can choose between Lord Barnett's 1982 report which firmly concluded (as does the Zircon programme) that 'Full accountability to Parliament in future is imperative'. Or they can choose instead Sir Gordon Downey's legalisms.

They must also choose between the Robert Sheldon of 7 October and the Robert Sheldon of 27 January. Whom are they going to believe? Until that is sorted out, scandals like Chevaline, and Zircon can happen again, and again. Sir Gordon Downey admitted as much this week, and claimed that he had 'always made it clear to Parliament that there was certain information which on national security grounds they would not get. This was not overtaken by the MoD agreement to supply the Project Statement.' □

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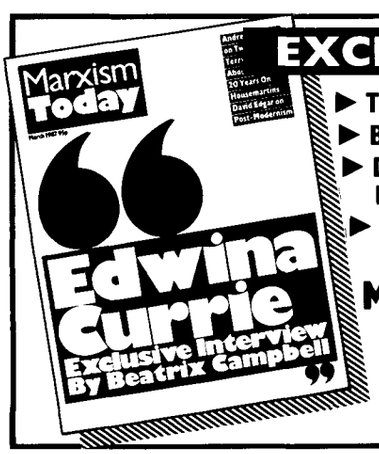

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MEDIA

TV's pre-digested news is driving out sense

David Tereshchuk

FOR A TELEVISION journalist, watching TV news can be a dispiriting experience these days. Being imbued with the best will in the world — and the greatest professional sympathy — he or she will want news colleagues to succeed in their jobs, despite the petty jealousies our trade is sometimes liable to. However, such goodwill and sympathy are increasingly being put under strain. The concern arises especially from stories which are 'running' and at the same time complicated in their twists and turns; they require the news not merely to be 'cast' before us, but just as much *explained*.

'Irangate' in Washington and the Peter Wright case in Sydney are recent examples of this requirement — one which is not being met by the main TV news bulletins in this country. If, as we are told by the pollsters, the majority of Britons derive their essential information about the world at large from these bulletins, then we are being poorly served. As so often, a Barry McAllister pocket cartoon for the *Guardian* homed in on the mass media's failure. 'Excuse me sir,' says a policeman to a motorist, 'We've run out of breathalyser kits: would you mind explaining the details of the M15 case, please?'

It need not have been like this; public bafflement is not inevitable. It is a little reported story that a new animal in the TV news menagerie was created with the opening of BBC1's Six O'Clock News, only to be killed off early in the programme's lifetime. This creature was nicknamed the 'Bexpo', or Brief Explanatory Piece. Its regular place in the bulletin, usually immediately following the main headline item, was junked on the grounds that it 'held up the programme' (this phrase was used — of course — in the sense of delaying, not of supporting).

To complain about such abandonment of journalistic duty is not simply to hark back to the 'bias against understanding' theory which was advanced in the mid-'70s by Peter Jay and John Birt (and attempted in practice on LWT's *Weekend World* by this reporter and — in case another interest has to be declared — also by the present editor of the *NS*), because there is now much to be proud of in our TV news and current affairs. Many of our factual programmes have over the last decade massively improved their ability to engage the viewer's background understanding of complex and fast-moving events.

> ***If we want depth as well as instant delivery and a fast pace, our TV selector buttons might as well be slaved to the minority channels***

Perhaps the high point came with the Falklands/Malvinas War, with not only *Weekend World* but also BBC2's *Newsnight* doing fine analytical jobs, often up against alarming deadlines and all of officialdom's obstacles. Most visibly perhaps, the clever deployment of video graphics to illustrate previously 'non-televisual' concepts — especially economic and international strategic ones — has been aided by some dramatic advances in computer technology.

So why should we feel so starved of anything to chew on when we are addressed by the main news outlets on subjects like 'Arms for hostages/money for Contras' or 'The Wally amongst the wallabies'? It is, I believe, partly a result of the very glossiness and slickness now required in the major bulletins, of which the computer graphics revolution is the most obvious demonstration. (Some producers on ITN's *News at Ten* are notorious for their almost 'Crack'-like addiction to dazzling electronic 'Paintbox' graphic sequences; these confound the familiar TV cliché because they literally shed much light, rather than heat, but can still confer little understanding.)

Award-winning Kate Adie, an authoritative joy in her *Newsnight* days

However, there is also an editorial and structural process at work besides the technical and presentational ones. The fact that *Newsnight* and, coming up fast in the last four years, *Channel Four News*, have operated so successfully in presenting in-depth explanations has taken an onus of responsibility away from editors of more mainstream news.

The fate of the 'Bexpo': is just one example. Among 'straight' BBC newspersons I have frequently heard it muttered: 'Well, *Newsnight* will go into all that complicated stuff'. And even in the more tightly organised world of ITN (which generates both *Channel Four News* and *News at Ten*, but through different teams) there is a feeling that 'some of us let the others off the hook'. In the fast and competitive flurry of the 'straight' bulletins on the major channels, the notion of 'New viewers start here' — or even 'Confused viewers start here' — barely gets a look-in.

This is not to say, though, that everything is hunky-dory on BBC2 and Channel Four. *C4 News* may be enjoying a period of grace now under its second editor Stuart Purvis, who can justifiably vaunt his approach of creating coherent and what he calls 'blended-in' packages of background, as against BBC1's ill-fated 'Bexpos', since the latter were 'far too obvious'. For the time being at least, the analysis-hungry viewer can probably rely on *C4 News*. But BBC2's *Newsnight* looks under some strain. The drive for high ratings on BBC1 under Michael Grade's energetic presence seems to have diverted resources to his channel's early evening programmes (particularly, in the South East region, *London Plus* — an important audience-builder) and away from the second channel's late-night prestige-earner.

WE NOW SEE fewer of the longer and carefully pre-prepared film or video reports which once characterised *Newsnight*, and we have to be content with studio discussions mounted swiftly on the day. The programme's previous editor, Richard Tait, was seen in the *Independent* to bemoan restrictions on his budget which prevent him from sending his own people abroad, even to events like the Reykjavik summit. Things were not helped, either, by the impression that after John Tusa's departure to fresh, executive pastures we were for a period faced too often with some 'second eleven' presenters: though this changed with the recruitment of the *Observer*'s Adam Raphael, an incisive print and radio journalist (but not a seasoned TV professional).

> ***In the fast and competitive flurry of the "straight" bulletins on the major channels, the notion of "new viewers start here" barely gets a look-in***

Despite the worries, we are still better served by *Newsnight* — and *C4 News* — than by the news offerings of either of the two mass networks. It is becoming a depressingly unavoidable fact of journalistic life that if we want depth as well as instant delivery and a fast pace, our TV selector buttons might as well be slaved to the minority channels.

One final thought, and perhaps an even more dispiriting one: when the upheaval currently convulsing our electronic communications industry finally resolves itself, and (just for instance) the Direct Broadcast Satellite system does bring us 24-hour, rapid-fire TV news, who is going to want to watch programmes which give us in-depth explanatory background to that news? Enough of us to ensure that programmes like *Newsnight* and *Channel Four News* will still be worth making? □

David Tereshchuk was Editor-in-Chief of the International Broadcasting Trust from 1983 to 1986, and now reports for Diverse Reports on Channel Four.

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THE 'MORAL' BACKLASH

When grown men are babies

As 12 young people recover from a bruising experience with South Staffs authorities apparently in a state of Aids hysteria,* ANDREW LUMSDEN *gives three new reasons why 'preacher' James Anderton, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, should be dismissed for fomenting alarm and incompetence

I CAN'T SWEAR that each of the three episodes I shall refer to here were the *direct* result of the hugely-publicised 11 December speech in which Manchester Chief Constable James Anderton condemned the 'moral cesspool' inhabited by the majority of British Aids sufferers, *viz* gays and drug users. But look at the timing, as stray events dating to December come to light.

1. The Taunton engineers

Asked to fix the pay-phone of a tiny gay club for men and women in Taunton, Somerset, an armada of three engineers, a supervisor and a manager turned up on behalf of British Telecom in mid-December, together with protective gloves. Originally the engineers had wanted to wear masks too, and to be met by someone with a certificate saying he or she hadn't got Aids. This 3 February BT apologised to the county health authority: 'Given the tone of media coverage . . .'

Another month or so, and on 23 January the *Somerset County Gazette* headlined 'Bloodbath warning on Gay Club'. After 13 years in wretchedly inaccessible premises (I know: I've visited them) and without any troubles with the police, the Pavilion club asked the local bench for a club registration certificate for a very discreet but more central location.

The certificate was granted on 22 January. The police made no objections. The local LVA (Licensed Victuallers Association) did. Taunton Deane LVA said 'we don't like homosexuals on our doorstep' and warned that drunks 'seeing a homosexual will want to cause trouble', and there'll be a 'bloodbath' within a year. The county press picked it up in lurid style and *Any Questions*, happening to be from the West Country at that very moment (750,000 listeners), featured a question: 'Is a gay club suitable for a High Street?'

2. The 'Wombourne 12'

Far from Taunton, but at much the time of the LVA and BT engineers' hysteria, South Staffordshire police (Chief Constable, Charles Kelly) put three lesbians and nine gay men, age-range 17-25, in handcuffs for court appearances after arresting them on breach of the peace charges on 21 December.

The 'Wombourne 12' (*NS* 9 January) had demonstrated that day in the Wombourne garden of the Conservative leader of South Staffs DC, Cllr Bill Brownhill, as a result of an opinion he had given on 19 December (eight days after Anderton) that his personal solution to Aids would be to 'gas 90 per cent of queers'. All 12 young people — apostolic number — were remanded in custody for seven days over Christmas on prosecution allegations, refuted by the defence, that none had been confirmed as having provided truthful names and addresses.

Despite the remands, *the charges have been dropped* (18 February). They included one additional charge against a young woman, Gill King, of assaulting a police officer. Here we must zero in. Besides the seemingly punitive remands and the handcuffs, the defendants allege that: they were asked to take Aids virus tests; that a station officer intending to fingerprint them put on protective gloves; that Gill King was told she might be charged with attempted murder of a police officer.

Gill King, told she might be charged with attempted murder for spitting (she says in self defence) at a police officer

Why? Because, a lesbian, she had spat at an arresting officer. It occurred in a police car, and she maintains — and will be suing over it — that it was necessary self-defence against violent behaviour by a uniformed officer against herself and another woman. The *Wolverhampton Star* wrote (22 December): 'Police officer has Aids test after being spat at by gay protestor.'

The Crown Prosecution Service local office in Stafford is not obliged to say why all charges have been dropped ('We are not at liberty to disclose why' says their Mr Tony Long, and this principle of confidentiality is confirmed by the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in London). No legal redress for seven days' imprisonment, despite subsequent dropping of charges, is available. The whole sequence 'must give rise', says Louise Christian, of Christian Fisher & Co, representing ten of the 'Wombourne 12', to 'speculation that the Prosecution Service found something pretty awful, perhaps material discrepancies in police evidence'.

Or . . . Mr M. J. David, chairman of the bench at Seisdon magistrates court where the handcuffed lesbians and gays appeared, may have been displeased. He has received very strong protests from both Louise Christian and Ivan Geffen, Walsall solicitor representing the other two defendants. Will there be an investigation into the December events? 'I can't comment', says Long, for Stafford CPS, but adds what appears to be an unconscious revelation: 'The chief constable is aware of the bench's feelings'.

3. The 'Vauxhall 11'

On 17 December in London the 'Met', in the form of officers from Kennington police station, raided one of London's best known gay pubs, the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in London. This was followed up on 23 January by a second raid involving some 20 or more officers, some of whom are described as having worn rubber gloves. Eleven arrests were made on the second occasion, plus landlord Pat McConnon, amid accusations of rough handling by the police.

No charges have been made as a result of the second raid, though 'cautions' were given. Following the first, five persons have been accused of supplying 'noxious substances', believed to be a reference to inhalable amyl nitrites or 'poppers'. Stuart Holland, Labour MP for Vauxhall, has taken up the question of exactly what the police thought they were up to. The local LVA — in this instance — came out on the side of the pub. And its licence was renewed on 9 February.

SINCE MAY 1985 the office of Surrey's chief constable, Brian Hayes, has been circulating all 43 autonomous police forces in England and Wales with constantly updated operational advice on the infectivity of Aids and (equally important) hepatitis-B. Surrey does so on behalf of ACPO (the Association of Chief Police Officers) and the two lower-ranking staff associations.

Inter alia, plastic or rubber gloves are recommended to police officers for use in bodysearches where (e.g.) an exposed needle might be found. They are *not* recommended as necessary in the event of touching a lesbian or a gay man, e.g. for finger-printing. Saliva is *not* named as highly infectious.

Anderton's 'moral cesspool' denunciation was swiftly followed by Cardinal Hume's 'moral Chernobyl' (13 December) and Cllr Brownhill's 'gas them' (19 December) — and vociferously re-affirmed by Anderton himself until he was silenced by the chief inspector of constabulary, Sir Lawrence Byford, on 22 January. The original denunciation was delivered at what had been designed as a one-day seminar for senior police officers to exchange practical information on Aids.

As ACPO seeks to maintain orderliness in the face of wholly understandable fear, Anderton seems in two perceptible cases involving other police forces than his own, and in just one civilian matter to have come to my own notice (the Taunton pay-phone), to have inspired disorder and panic. The chronology suggests so. Anyone like to add to the dossier, and send it to Sir Lawrence Byford? □

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'No take-off in an earthquake'

Deng Xiaoping is trying to ride the bucking horses of 'liberalisation' on the one side, and preservation of Party power on the other, without everyone tumbling off into another Cultural Revolution-style bout of excesses.

JONATHAN MIRSKY *reports*

LAST OCTOBER in Peking a veteran party man just a step below the supreme leadership pounded on the table and sent out a signal I missed. China was poor, backward and in need of modernisation, he said, 'but no small group will be permitted to change its social structure'. What was not then known to foreigners was that only a week or two before, at a party conference, the conservatives had collectively banged on the table to demonstrate their anger at the reformers' neglect of revolutionary ideals, central planning, and, most of all, party authority.

What enraged these old comrades — months before the student demonstrations which began only in early December — was the outpouring of articles in the official press questioning the role of the party and debating which foreign forms might improve what everyone was careful to call, but no one to define, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It had come to mean, many of the conservatives feared, little more than a modernised country, with quadrupled production by the year 2000, and a per capita income of $4000. These were, indeed, the targets set by Deng Xiaoping, who replied, when asked by Mike Wallace of CBS television on 2 September 1986, when he expected socialism to emerge fully in China: 'Not for a very very long time.'

This is the sort of vision which made the conservatives despair, especially when it assumed startling forms in the press. On 1 November 1986, for instance, there appeared in *Guangming Daily*, the newspaper favoured by intellectuals, these heretical words: 'It has been long assumed that the ideal for Chinese people is the realisation of Communism . . . This is a narrow-minded view that has frightened patriots who wanted to make a contribution to the country.'

'Bourgeois liberalism'

Now such statements are impossible. China has moved abruptly into one of those political maelstroms which many observers — and most Chinese — had felt certain could not recur: student marches; the resignation of party general secretary Hu Yaobang; the expulsion from the party of three leading intellectuals; the replacement of the president and vice-president of the Academy of Sciences; and the sacking of the propaganda chief. The Central Committee has just told the Chinese that every one of them, including peasants and soldiers, is responsible for combatting bourgeois liberalism. Foreigners are being shunned by Chinese.

On 21 January, *Guangming Daily* had swung sharply to the left and in chorus with every other Chinese newspaper was attacking the writers whom the party had just purged for undermining its discipline: 'At the present stage, adherence to the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, the party leadership, the Marx-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought . . . form the basis for the unity and unification of the whole party.' But *Guangming Daily* then added a phrase which sums up the events of the last month: 'The current struggle against bourgeois liberalism is related to the party's destiny and the future of socialism and to the success or failure of comprehensive reforms and opening up.'

Both at the top level of leadership and farther down the hierarchy of power there are voices insisting that there must be no old-fashioned tumult and ever-widening purge. At a meeting of provincial leaders and mayors in late January, senior cadres must have been wondering how far the anti-bourgeois drive was to extend. Zhao Ziyang, concurrently premier and, since the deposition of Hu Yaobang, party general secretary, told them that there must be no 'inflation' of the current struggle. Only three men had been 'named', Zhao observed, referring to the party's style of public purge, which turns the 'named' person into a target of national abuse.

> ***'Writers and artists are urged to emulate "willing oxen bowing their necks before the proletariat"'***

One of them was Fang Lizhi (*NS* 9 January), the vice-president of the university where the first demonstration took place in early December, blamed for the ensuing weeks of campus marches, and now known as 'China's Sakharov'. Localities, Zhao emphasised, 'should not grab little Fang Lizhis.'

Nor should the movement be extended to the rural areas, the Premier went on, and great care should be taken not to fall back on Cultural Revolution-style 'checks and ordeals', procedures Zhao remembered clearly because he himself had once endured them at the hands of the Gang of Four. A few days later, at a Chinese New Year's gathering in Peking's Great Hall of the People, Zhao returned to the theme of national stability, and now underlining the economy: 'How can economic reforms proceed if the political situation is unstable and social order is chaotic . . . Who can take off in the middle of an earthquake?'

But the men hunting down bourgeois liberals are not Cultural Revolutionists having another go, 11 years after Mao's death in 1976. Many of them suffered under the Gang and want no more earthquakes. What they want for China is 'fu-qiang', wealth and power, but not the 'spiritual pollution' of the West, It is the old 19th century reformers' dichotomy: 'xi-xue wei yong, zhong-xue wei ti': Western learning for practical matters, Chinese learning for what is essential.

The leading conservatives, men in their late 60s to mid 80s, are collected in the party's Central Advisory Commission and the National People's Congress, to which they were gently retired by Deng who wanted younger, better educated 'second and third generations' to implement his reforms. But the old veterans retain great influence. Outside Peking they find support in older party members, retired from leading provincial posts who, such is the traditional Chinese veneration for age and experience, also retain great local influence even among the younger Dengists who have succeeded them.

It is often difficult in China to predict who will side with the conservatives when party authority is threatened. Deng Xiaoping, for example, who initiated the reforms, is second to none when it comes to enforcing party discipline; his statements on the subject are commonly wheeled out by the conservatives to sanction their current drive.

It is a sign of the strength of the conservatives, despite Zhao's calls for moderation, that they have returned to the attack. Party circulars insist that peasants no longer place profits first and refocus their minds on frugality and the apprehending of bourgeois liberals. The army's high command has given similar assurances that ideological weaklings will be rooted out. Writers and artists are once more on notice that loyalty to the party and a positive attitude towards national needs are priorities, not intellectual expression and experiments. Maoist texts have been reinvoked to stress the virtues of austerity, frugality, optimism, and, above all, loyalty to the party. The bourgeois liberals who admire the US are accused of making China vulnerable to Aids, homosexuality, and violence.

Easy targets

It is said in Peking that the recent reforms in the Soviet Union, some of them affecting the central organisation of the party, have alarmed older Chinese revolutionaries who, despite the bad relations with Moscow since 1959, still think of the USSR as the Mother of Socialism.

Failings in China's urban reforms, therefore, have presented the old communists with easy targets: inadequate central planning, inflation, too many imports, loss of foreign exchange, official corruption, and a general desire to get-rich-quick, while others remain poor. Many of the criticisms voiced since January were first heard in September 1985, when Deng Xiaoping's most potent critic and fellow-member of the supreme five-man Standing Committee of the Politburo, Chen Yun, warned that socialists believed in planning. Chen is widely respected in China; he has not spoken publicly since the student demonstrations began, but his well-known opinions buttress the conservative position.

And although intellectuals for the most part are keeping silent and avoiding compulsory exhibitions of loyalty, most will have been frightened by several weeks of party circulars and injunctions. One of them, pasted up according to order in every work-place in the country, commands total obedience to the party and states that the struggle against its enemies will be conducted 'without magnanimity'. □

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DEBATE

Totalitarian rabbit hole

Last week Ken Loach and Andrew Hornung objected to* NS *theatre critic* VICTORIA RADIN*'s review of the text of Jim Allen's vexed play,* Perdition *(which Loach was to direct). This is Radin's response

LAST WEEK this paper ran a long and fantastical article on the theme of *Perdition*, the first stage play by the television docu-dramatist Jim Allen. The article was co-authored by Ken Loach, a TV and film director whose first stage production this also was, and by Andrew Hornung. Loach and Hornung's article was a reply to my more modestly-proportioned review of the text humbly buried in the *NS*'s arts pages two weeks before.

I think, first, we need to clear the air. Messrs Allen, Loach and Hornung do not like the state of Israel. Good. To a point I agree with them. So do many people who don't like *Perdition*. Here are some facts.

First fact. These copies of *Perdition* — which Loach and Hornung 'can only assume' were 'circulated' by 'Zionist organisations' — were sent to journalists by the press office of the Royal Court itself — as is its custom with all its plays.

Second fact. The vast chasm which Loach and Hornung claim separates the early draft of *Perdition* from the later version is not very large. I own, as I did when I wrote my review, copies of both an early text and the one designated as the rehearsal script a few days before the play was due to open. There is not much to choose between them. Some fallacies have been deleted: for example, the equation of Rabbinical Law with the Nazi Nuremberg Laws of 1933; but I find the ending of the second version even more dishonest. In the last few pages, *Perdition*'s sole mouthpiece for rebutting charges against Nazi-Zionist collaboration suddenly reveals that he had in fact set up the play's trial in collusion with his purported opponent for the purpose of knocking the views that he was meant to be representing. His entire argument and, since this is a courtroom drama, the play's, is thus rendered null and void.

Third fact. The Royal Court and the Manchester Library Theatre, who early on cancelled their co-production, both independently *chose* two different historians (who had never met), respectively Dr David Cesarani, now of Queen Mary College, London, and Martin Gilbert, of Merton College, Oxford, and *commissioned* them to write reports on the play. I presume that this is what Loach and Hornung mean when they refer to historians' 'hostile reviews' (*sic*: the Cesarani report runs to 22 pages). Both historians found the play filled with serious inaccuracies. It is interesting to remember in this context Allen's two-page interview in *Time Out* (where he labelled the subject of his play, the Holocaust, a 'myth'): here he said that the Court had sent the play to '25 different academics and all we've had has been one scathing but anonymous attack.' I have a copy of a letter Allen wrote to the Court 18 months ago in which he talks about the Cesarani report.

Fourth and very important fact. The play was not 'banned', 'censored' or 'suppressed', as is the lazy parlance of the press, who picked up the terms from Allen, Loach and Hornung. The Court's artistic director, Max Stafford-Clark — who is now said by his office to be 'bored with the whole thing' and did not return my phone calls — *cancelled* its production at his theatre. The real story is that very late in the day indeed, in fact five days before the scheduled opening, Stafford-Clark rang up Martin Gilbert and asked if he could come to see him in order to go through the text together. Gilbert spent three hours pointing out inaccuracies. The text was constantly being changed by Allen and Loach right up to the moment Stafford-Clark pulled it. How could he 'stand behind it', when it was mutating moment by moment?

Another important fact. The Royal Court's advisory body, the Council, who number four Jewish members out of 19, did not put pressure on the theatre to withdraw the play. Stafford-Clark has said so (in the same *Time Out* interview) and two (non-Jewish) members of the Council have corroborated this to me. What happened was that the Council had seen neither the script nor the historians' reports until three days before the first preview was scheduled, when they were shown the Cesarani report. They immediately convened a meeting at which Stafford-Clark was present. It lasted four hours. 'Max realised that he was putting his reputation on a third-rate play,' according to an important (and non-Jewish) member of the Council, who calls the *Perdition* affair 'an internal cock-up of the highest order'.

The Council voted 11 to 4, with a few abstentions, that the play should nevertheless go on, under the following conditions: 1) that the first preview should be postponed for four days; 2) that the play should be read by a third historian (he was to have been Dr Norman Stone of Oxford); 3) that the play be read for libel (astonishingly, in this *Fawlty Towers* episode of the Court, none of their management had thought to consult their solicitor about a play which named three people currently living in England); and 4) that all members of the Council should be provided with a copy of the script, which they still had not seen.

These conditions were practicable, but Stafford-Clark chose instead to pack in the whole thing. The next day, he cancelled the production.

Allen, Loach and the actors were, justifiably, very angry. They naturally tried to get it on somewhere else. No theatre has taken *Perdition* so far, but not, as Loach and Hornung imaginatively allege, for reasons of a 'censorship lobby', a 'Zionist campaign' or a 'powerful clique'. Says Nicky Pallot, an artistic director of the Bush Theatre: 'What worried me was that the author seemed to take a view without discussion or dialectic.' Pierre Audi, artistic director of the Almeida, told me: 'They phoned me up and I said, no, and the next thing I knew the *6 O'Clock News* was saying we were going to put on *Perdition*. Loach later apologised to me.'

Interesting fact. Gerry Sinott, who runs the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, is the sole management actually named by Loach and Hornung as a post-Royal Court casualty of the massive 'Zionist campaign' they proclaim so zestfully. Sinott did indeed consider staging the play. But he was very surprised to read in the *NS* that a 'political group' had stopped its production at his theatre. 'I certainly did not come in contact with it,' he told me. 'The fact that we decided not to put it on was based on a *legal* problem. Because the actors wanted to be free to make other commitments and also because of our scheduling, I had only two days to make my decision. What we had was a time pressure. This is not censorship. Basically the history of this play is that the Royal Court made a balls-up.'

Stafford-Clark, too, has said that there were no threats from sponsors to withdraw backing. Matthew Evans, Chairman of the Court Council and of Faber and Faber, told me: 'At no stage did anyone suggest that *Perdition* be taken off. There were absolutely no threats. All that people were arguing was that, given the extraordinary complexity of the material, would the Court please ensure that there were no significant inaccuracies in the play.'

The hub of the dilemma. Nobody, inside or outside the Court, has ever made any great artistic claims for *Perdition*. Four directors turned it down before Loach accepted it. Mike Alfreds, now at the National Theatre, was one of them. He told me: 'What I hated about it was that it was terribly over-simplified. From the beginning, we're told what to believe. The author doesn't want us to make up our own minds. It isn't a play — it's a piece of agitprop. Jim Allen should have gone out and hired a hall.' Alfreds sent Stafford-Clark a two-page letter, dated 1 December 1985, where he makes many other points, among which are: 'To take on Zionism, the Holocaust and (in two speeches) Rabbinical Law, needs a much stronger intellectual hold.'

Michael Hastings, the Court's literary manager, is no Zionist. But he had doubts about the play, which he voiced in the covering letter which accompanied the script he sent to Cesarani. He backed the play until he saw a run-through. Then he 'found in the production a relentless resonance. There is a subtext here that the target is Jews (. . .) I realised *Perdition* could be looked upon as an anti-Jewish play, *no matter how much I agreed with the polemic*.'

Sadness. Every person who has written an article or broadcast on *Perdition* — those who had read the script and were unconnected to the production — has said substantially the same thing as Alfreds, Hastings and me. In addition to Loach and Hornung's hit-list of Levin, Goodman, Stephen Games and Martin Gilbert, they include David Pryce-Jones in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Barbara Amiel in *The Times*, David Rose in the *Guardian*, and on the BBC's *Saturday Review*, Dr Mary Warnock, Dr Jonathan Steinberg and Michael Ignatieff.

Can Loach and Hornung *really* believe that because there was a pretty unanimous verdict on *Perdition* by theatre people and by journalists who probably have never even met — I do not know any of them — that the cause must be a conspiracy? Forget, for a moment, about Jews and racism. This sort of thinking, whatever its application, leads straight down the totalitarian rabbit hole. □

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ECONOMICS

Cut taxes and aid the poor

Frank Field

LABOUR IS foolishly boxing itself into a corner over impending Tory tax cuts. 'We will restore any budget tax cuts' is not only a sure way of unnecessarily losing votes, but reinforces in the voters' minds the image of Labour as a high tax party. The party should go onto the attack with policies aimed at cutting the rates for most taxpayers far beyond what Mrs Thatcher envisages. Such an approach needs to be sold as part of Labour's Freedom and Fairness campaign.

The way the 'burden' of taxation is presented is highly misleading. As most people *do* think of taxation as a 'burden', it is silly of the left to pretend that this is not the case. Yet Labour spokespersons join with Tories in making the position sound worse than it is. In public debate, who pays what is invariably presented in marginal tax terms — that is, what a taxpayer will pay on an additional £1.00 in income.

However, for most taxpayers there is a marked difference between *marginal* and *average* rates of tax — the latter being the amount averaged out on each £1.00 of income. The reason for this difference is simple. It stems from the structure of income tax which is built around the idea of tax allowances which can be offset against taxable income. The greater the value of these allowances, the more the income exempted from tax, and the less a person pays to the Exchequer as a result.

This was not always so. Until the 1920 Budget, the British system of direct taxation was based on exemption. Tax allowances were granted, but taxpayers were unable to offset these allowances against their taxable income as soon as income rose above a certain level. In 1920, Austen Chamberlain transformed the system into today's income tax allowance system by allowing tax exemptions to be claimed no matter how big the taxpayer's income. A second change allowed these tax benefits to be offset against income which would otherwise attract high rates of tax.

A system which had, therefore, been designed to keep the income of the poor out of tax was reshaped into one which did this, while exempting the same bands of income of all other taxpayers. The cost of reviewing tax allowances was massively increased and this, together with the growth in government expenditure, has resulted in a fall in the tax threshold, or the level of income at which tax begins to be paid. This fall has subjected part of the income of the poor to tax, while at the same time exempting from tax part of the income of well-heeled taxpayers.

The line Labour should now be adopting is one which promises to cut the standard rate of tax far in excess of what Mrs Thatcher proposes. This can be done only by shifting the burden of taxation from lower to higher income groups. Such an objective fits easily into the party's 'fairness policy'. By embarking upon a phasing-out of tax allowances or, more accurately, tax benefits, the party will gain a new edge to the freedom side of its Freedom and Fairness campaign.

Apart from personal tax allowances, these tax benefits are gained only if taxpayers undertake a certain pattern of expenditure — such as buying houses — of which the government approves. Despite Mrs Thatcher's rhetoric, this is the paternalistic state writ large. In Mrs Thatcher's Britain taxpayers pick up considerable tax benefits on condition that they spend their money in a way the government thinks is good for them.

IT HAS BEEN the growth in tax allowances which has allowed the rich to hide behind a smokescreen of high marginal tax rates while in reality paying an average rate far below many ordinary households. A recent Parliamentary Answer to Gordon Brown MP shows clearly what is going on.

> ***'Labour too can promise radical tax cuts, but only if it is prepared to reshape the structure of taxation. Over half of all personal income is exempted by a hundred or so tax benefits. By phasing these out Labour will shift the burden of taxation onto those with highest incomes'***

Married workers on salaries of £30,000 a year and £100,000 a year face marginal tax rates of 38.9 per cent and 51.2 per cent respectively on these earnings if no tax allowances are claimed other than personal ones. However, once the £100,000-a-year worker makes an annual investment of £40,000 of earnings under the Business Expansion Scheme, claims mortgage tax relief on a £30,000 loan, makes an annual investment of £5,000 into an approved pension scheme, and £1,000 life assurance premium, the marginal tax rate falls from 51.2 per cent to 21.6 per cent. The £30,000 a year worker, making a £5,000 investment under the same scheme, together with relief on a £30,000 mortgage, £1,500 into an approved pension scheme, and a £200 annual premium for a life assurance policy, reduces his or her marginal tax rate from 38.9 per cent to 19 per cent. The man on average earnings with no tax benefits other than personal tax allowances faces a marginal rate of 28.5 per cent.

> ***'For most taxpayers there is a marked difference between marginal and average rates of tax'***

Labour should commit itself to phasing out these tax allowances. Such a policy must, however, be accompanied by a clear commitment to earmark the resulting revenue for cutting the rate of tax as well as increasing the tax-free income of families by raising child benefit. This offers Labour the opportunity of talking the 'freedom' language which ordinary voters understand, and to which they might positively respond.

I have summarised how this reform could work in a book out next week (*Freedom and Wealth in a Socialist Future*, Constable, £7.95). The proposal is to impose a cash ceiling on all tax allowances, apart from personal tax allowances. Such a policy would work in the following way. Current expenditure on these tax benefits should be taken as a cash ceiling. In other words, if this policy were currently operating, a cash ceiling of £4.75 billion would be put on financing tax benefits gained from mortgage interest relief. Building societies would be told that this was the total sum available, and that they should share this equally among taxpayers who are presently claiming mortgage interest relief.

As Labour is already committed to operating tax benefits at the standard rate, the administration of the new scheme will be considerably simplified. Building societies will have to estimate the number of additional borrowers each year, and how the tax benefit is to be spread. Building societies currently operate a standard deduction scheme whereby the societies automatically deduct and pay the standard rate of tax to the government on loans accruing to each saver. A cash ceiling limit on tax benefits could operate a not too dissimilar policy in reverse. Paying each mortgagee at the same rate per pound borrowed would not only be an egalitarian measure, but would also be easier to operate. And, while mortgage interest relief is an obvious starting point, the policy should be simultaneously extended to all other major tax benefits.

There is a further reason why Labour should advocate such a policy now. The revenue lost by granting tax relief is escalating at such a rate that it threatens a future Labour government's ability to finance its modest social reforms. The cost of granting mortgage tax relief, relief on investment income of occupational pension schemes and for employers' and employees' occupational pension scheme contributions currently costs the Exchequer £12.6 billion. The granting of tax benefit constitutes a blank cheque signed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. And the greater the cost of the blank cheque, the greater the amount of personal income which is exempted from tax. And the more income exempted, the higher the marginal rate of tax which needs to be levied on the remaining taxable income for any given level of government expenditure.

It is foolish for Labour to pledge itself to reverse Tory cuts in income tax and to leave the debate there. Labour too can promise radical tax cuts, but only if it is prepared to reshape the structure of taxation. At the present time over half of all personal income is exempted by one of a hundred or so tax benefits. By phasing these out Labour will shift the burden of taxation onto those with highest incomes. It would also gain additional revenue allowing it to exempt the poor from tax and substantially reduce the rate of tax paid by ordinary taxpayers. By offering reform on this scale the party can move onto the attack, giving its Freedom and Fairness campaign an appeal which it currently lacks. □

Frank Field is Labour MP for Birkenhead.

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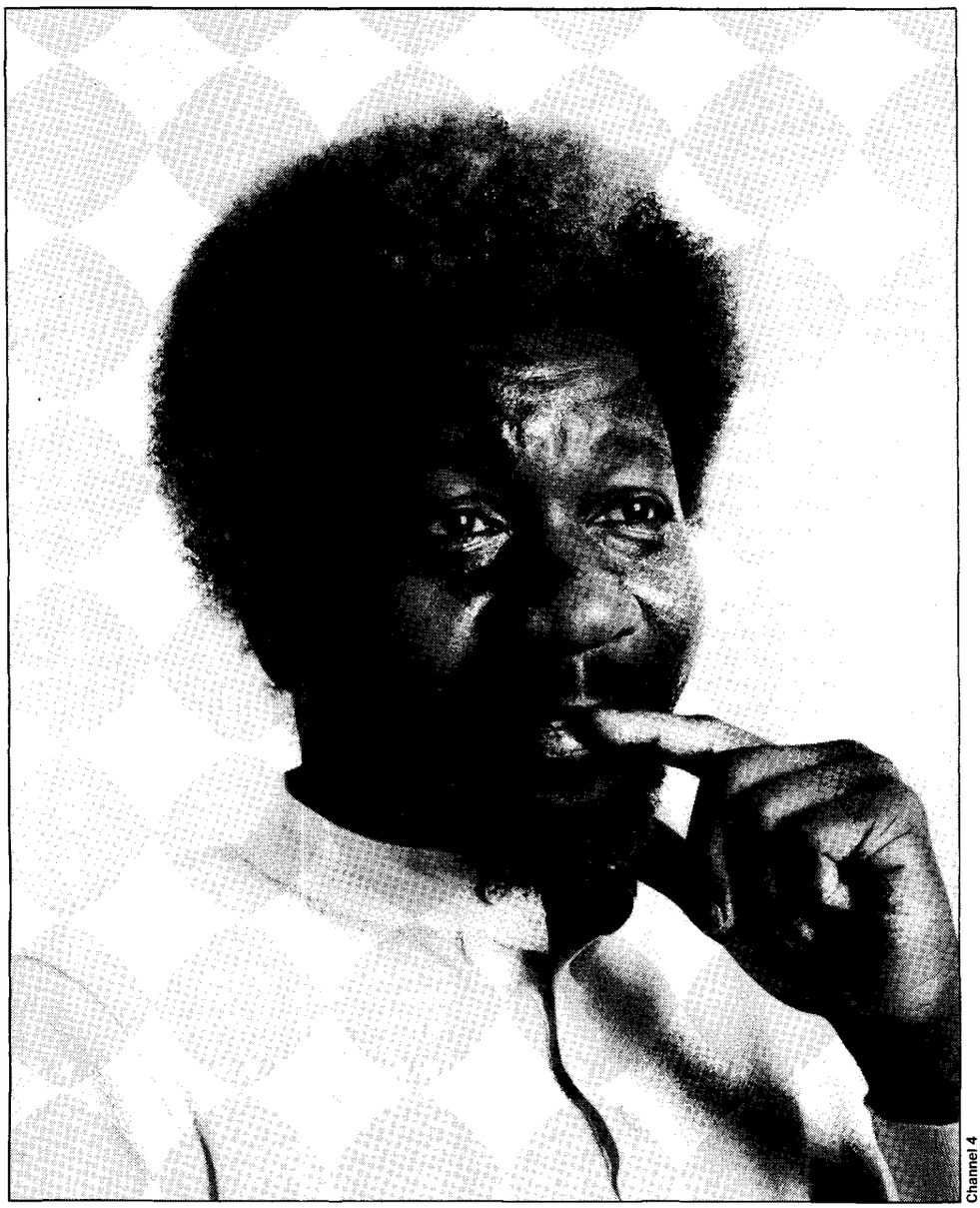
INTERVIEW

Wole Soyinka



Channel 4

The winning by a Nigerian of the Nobel Literature Prize was greeted, last year, by churlish grumblings in most of the British press.

JEREMY HARDING ***of The Bandung File has spoken to Wole Soyinka in New York***

WHEN NIGERIAN WRITER Wole Soyinka spoke at the award ceremonies in Sweden last December, he set the writings that had won him the 1986 Nobel Literature Prize firmly under the sign of the Yoruba deity, Ogun. Ogun, he explained, was his muse — god of iron, god of justice, god of creativity and destruction.

Together, Soyinka and his muse have been responsible for some 15 plays, two novels, three volumes of poetry, a film and an impressive body of critical, biographical and journalistic writings. They have also been co-conspirators on risky initiatives that have landed Soyinka in trouble more than once — most notably in August 1967, when he was detained and held for over two years in connection with the Biafran secession.

Like Soyinka, Ogun and his companions in the Yoruba pantheon travel well. In modified form, they persist in other West African cultures, Brazil and parts of the Caribbean. In this sense, perhaps, it is no surprise that Ogun, along with the ubiquitous Soyinka, should fetch up in Stockholm to grace a very European ritual.

Soyinka is also familiar with Britain. He was educated at Leeds University (1954-57) and attached to the Royal Court Theatre at the end of the Fifties. As part of the self-imposed exile from Nigeria which followed his detention, he returned to Britain and spent a year in Cambridge as a visiting fellow. During his imprisonment he won the *New Statesman*'s Jock Campbell Award for his novel *The Interpreters*. One of his poems from prison, 'Live Burial', was smuggled out of Nigeria and published by the *NS* in May 1969.

In addition to his commitments as a writer, dramatist and academic, Soyinka has made a steady series of interventions in public and political life. He has shown a lifelong aversion to apartheid. He has also spoken out against post-colonial dictatorship in Africa, subjecting its most dedicated exponents — Idi Amin, Bokassa, Mobuto and others — to a barrage of criticism and contempt.

In January *The Bandung File* asked Wole Soyinka to review his life and work as part of a programme commemorating his receipt of the award* The following are selected excerpts from the interview he gave in New York, where he is currently directing a production of his play *Death and the King's Horseman* at the Lincoln Centre.

Bandung: Is it true that you became more politically aware when you were a student in Leeds?

Soyinka: Yes, political knowledge was to a large extent very subtly censored within Nigeria itself. We knew what was happening in South Africa vaguely. You knew more intimately, more concretely what was happening in Kenya with the Mau Mau rebellion. But one didn't really understand fully what was happening until, ironically, one was in the heartland of the colonial power itself. I remember writing a full-length play on apartheid which underwent so many versions and ended up in the waste paper basket. Then I wrote *The Invention* which was done by the Royal Court Theatre in one of the Sunday night performances. But I missed the real contact, the physical knowledge — the visceral knowledge — of what was happening [in South Africa]. So naturally I turned towards my own area of the world and that's how I think I became engrossed in exploring the various facets of the dramatic material in my own society. Politically I redirected my energies, my concerns to what was happening in Nigeria.

Bandung: What were your experiences of racial prejudice in Britain?

Soyinka: Oh that was quite blatant. It was very strange. One expected it, but coming across it for the first time was quite something. When you entered a bus — it was that bad, in Leeds anyway — and attempted to sit near a white person, he or she would get up to go and sit somewhere else. They'd say, 'Oh, excuse me,' and brush past you. They weren't leaving the bus; they were just going

* *Wole Soyinka: A Combative Soul*; 7.30 Saturday 28 February, Channel Four.

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to find another seat. There were so many other aspects. In the shops. With landlords and landladies. It led to serious fights, because we were not going to take it lying down. And certainly most West Indians with whom I moved didn't accept it either.

Bandung: After university you lived in London and were attached to the Royal Court. What was it like in that period of great change?

Soyinka: Oh, that was marvellous. That was the rise of the playwrights like Osborne, Arnold Wesker a bit later, then Bond and Johnstone. The Royal Court as a real place of ferment. All the writers were experimenting with language and theatrical form. We used to have these workshops for actors and playwrights. From time to time one of us would have a Sunday evening experimental theatre in the Royal Court under George Devine.

The year and a half I spent with the Royal Court was very good, very stimulating, very exciting, but I just couldn't wait to get back to my own source and renew contact with it. I mean, four years is a long time at that age — a comparatively young age. I wanted to go back and form my own theatre company, commence my own experimentation. I did not believe that the London theatre was my scene, so to speak.

Bandung: How clear were your ideas about what you wanted to do when you returned to Nigeria in 1960?

Soyinka: I wanted to re-explore [Yoruba] theatrical forms and be able to establish a drama company which would utilise all the various idioms I'd acquired in my experience both abroad and at home . . . There were already existing theatre companies but they were amateur, even though the standard was quite high. So what I did was rob those various companies of the really professional ones who were also animated by a passion for theatre. And I welded them into a company . . . It was called 'The 1960 Masks'. We then proceeded to form a smaller unit called 'Orisun Theatre', which was nurtured and groomed by the parent body and which eventually came out on its own, and this was fully professional.

Bandung: Back in Nigeria, did you see your political activities as the responsibilities of an artist or those of a citizen?

Soyinka: Oh, the latter, very definitely. I have always refused to accept this romantic idea of the writer as a political combatant. There are many kinds of writers and all writers fulfil some kind of social function. Any human being with any form of sensibility knows what a lift it is — even for his combative soul — to read the work of a writer, a poem which enlarges his perceptions in any form. I do not believe the kind of writer who does nothing but that is a useless member of the community. I think those who have this kind of attitude are just vulgar authoritarian types. But I accept the fact that I'm a very political animal and I accept that politics is first of all a citizen's duty. I just happen to combine my artistic vocation with political fervour, that's all.

Bandung: How did you become involved in the Biafran question?

Soyinka: Oh, it's quite straightforward. I believed — and I still believe — that what happened to those who called themselves Biafrans, the Ibo people, was a crime for which the whole nation had to be held responsible . . . I believed at the same time that the act of secession was very politically foolish. What the Biafrans should have done was to insist on a kind of autonomy of action within the framework of Nigeria which would then enable the progressive forces in other parts of the country to link up with their aims, their aspirations . . . And this was the rationale behind my trip to Biafra to talk to Djukwu and some of the leaders of that rebellion and to try and form what we called the Third Force, which would operate in any way necessary to end the regime which was responsible for the national injury done to the Biafrans. And to try to create a more egalitarian platform, in which the various parts of Nigeria could participate as equals. Some of those who were involved in this particular move were later shot, ironically by the Biafran people. I was imprisoned by the other side.

Bandung: There's a sense [in your prison writings] of an immense isolation from your fellow prisoners, but also of solidarity with them . . . Can you say something about that?

Soyinka: I fleshed out the noises I heard coming from various areas: those who were praying over the wall; those who were being beaten . . . the feet which I spied through the drainage grill in the morning, chained and being led off towards the execution block. These were human beings who stayed with me for a very long while and almost for days transported me into a totally different level of existence . . . Everything took on an intensity; you know, the sounds, the smells just took on lives with intensities of their own. The lizards, the little millet stalks in the back of the yard; the feather which floated down from a passing crow, which I turned into a pen . . . You have to create your own world in your own head all the time, especially in solitary confinement. If I was among other prisoners I would write short stories in my head and recite to them, and that would be a form of writing, a form of communication. I would read my poems to them; we might create little forms of theatre . . . But as a creative person, a compulsively creative person, [it was all] a little bit difficult.

Bandung: What about the period of exile from Gowon's Nigeria that followed shortly after your release?

Soyinka: I had to get out; that was obvious. I could not stand the political deceit that was going on under the regime of this man who for very good reasons had become widely accepted by Nigerians; and his handling of the war was magnanimous, one must never take that credit away from Gowon. But we're talking about a situation where the army became an occupying force in the whole country . . . I found I could not participate in any meaningful process of change until I had first of all resolved my prison experiences . . . I needed to go out and put together poems I'd written. I couldn't do it in Nigeria; it was impossible for me to continue work in that atmosphere of universal self-deceit.

Bandung: When you returned from your self-imposed exile, what were your reasons for forming the agitprop theatre in the post-Gowon period — the guerrilla theatre?

Soyinka: Well, don't forget it was nothing new. It was a continuation of what we were doing with the Orisun theatre in the early Sixties. That was agitprop also . . . I grew up, you know, with examples of the touring theatres . . . so that is also part of my dramatic heritage.

Bandung: Is there a link between your work in popular theatre and your decision to make the film *Blues for a Prodigal*?

Soyinka: *Blues for a Prodigal* was an attempt to contribute politically to the critical elections of 1983 and the aftermath. We created a script as we went along. We couldn't even afford to let any text get into the wrong hands during that period — which was the Shagari administration's ultimate apotheosis as a fascist regime that killed and murdered at will. So we were constantly at risk and we moved from spot to spot. Sometimes we did the very impractical thing of beginning with one location and, instead of shooting all the scenes on that location, we'd just finish there one day, go to another location, then come back to the first location, just for security reasons. So in a sense we utilised the guerrilla tactics of the travelling theatre . . . One of the most incredible experiences I've ever had.

Bandung: Where do you stand on the debate about writing in indigenous languages as against colonial languages?

Soyinka: The first statement is that there is no 'as against'. All these languages exist and fulfil their functions on many levels. But because of that needling discomfort which all of us share, those of us who write in colonial languages — I doubt if there is anybody who doesn't undergo bouts of resentment that he or she has to write in one of these languages — probably because of that, I have for many years advocated a continental language in Black Africa, which is Kiswahili.

Now, what I will not do is what Ngugi wa Thiongo has done. I live in a country which is multilingual; where the very idea that one indigenous language should become a national language is a recipe for immediate civil war. And there's no question at all about that. We've been through one civil war. Those who haven't had their civil war can become very romantic about that issue . . . I certainly have no wish to see my language, Yoruba, perish from the surface of the earth; but at the same time, because I want works which are written in Yoruba to be accessible to other Nigerians who don't speak it, I've translated a Yoruba classic — D. Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Demons* — into English. I've translated Yoruba poems into English, the same way as other people have done with their own languages. So I see no 'as against'. I see a complementarity of these various languages.

Bandung: What responsibilities and freedoms do you think have come with the Nobel Award?

Soyinka: The first thing is that I have to seize back my freedom as fast as possible. The Nobel Prize is one of the most enslaving events that I know of. One has to be very, very careful to seize his life back as fast as possible. I'm already beginning to do that . . . I know that there will be added responsibilities; there'll be certain political responsibilities — to act more as a voice for certain unheard sections of our humanity, particularly my own. And I certainly intend to fulfil that responsibility.

But I will not accept the responsibility of becoming a circuit lecturer, a 'conferencier', you know, just going from one thing to the other. I don't believe I was awarded the Nobel Prize to go on this circuit. That responsibility I will not accept. The others, yes. □

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ARTS

DANCE

Beyond the umbrella

Stephanie Jordan

Spring Loaded
The Place, to 28 March

AS THEATRE DIRECTOR of the ICA, John Ashford found an audience for fringe strong and big enough to fill 200 seats throughout the year. He was a risk, with his introduction of unfamiliar writers and groups and promotion of the new performance-art movement, but he soon gave that theatre its identity. Now, as director of The Place, he plans to repeat his success — but this time for dance — in a venue which he hopes will become London's established home for small-scale dance.

Appointed last October, Ashford has begun his directorship with energy. Already he has a seven-week season, Spring Loaded, planned and underway in an otherwise quiet season of the dance calendar. By including all that he finds interesting and available, and the extremes of what might be called dance, Ashford hopes to transform The Place and its audience within three years; if he succeeds, the late Eighties could be the most vital time in the life of that theatre since it opened 18 years ago as the powerhouse of multi-media and a general arts centre (the RSC, Fires of London and the Other Cinema all operated there) as much as a home for contemporary dance. Now, the urgent need is to increase opportunities specifically for contemporary dance.

With British work so poorly represented by Umbrella '86, Ashford has provided a welcome chance to give it another showing. Some of the choices are dynamic, several new groups included who've never made it to Umbrella but are ready for the higher profile and challenge of a full programme that a festival can offer. By no means is Spring Loaded simply 'pure' dance. There is Helen Crocker, trapeze dance artist; La Bouche, specialists in electro-acoustic rock combined with dance; Jacky Lansley, whose work is theatre as much as dance. And a different angle brings new faces to the audiences; surely a good sign.

The warm reception given to Liz Aggiss and colleagues from Brighton was deserved. Aggiss' point — obfuscated by curious, unexplained section titles, but suggested by the group's name, Divas — is to rebuke women who begrudgingly accept 'roles' and competition, a rebuke hardening into defiance when the players, originally in drab suits, eventually sport singlets and Y-fronts. The seven women in the outer sections are credited according to their amateur status: filmmaker, lesbian mother, cleaner, etc. The language is stark, largely an anguished distortion of everyday gestures.

Divas' evening has, at its core, an expressionist utterance in Aggiss' solo, 'grotesque dancer', after the vaudeville turn. It is relentlessly monochrome,

Eleni Leoussi

Nigel Charnock in DV8 Physical Theatre's *Deep End*

with Aggiss — first glimpsed in a small spotlight, wearing black satin circus knickers, white top and socks — showing vivid visual imagination. In black wig, later cast off to reveal shaved head, she croaks co-author Billy Cowie's parodistic German accordion songs, *nach* Weill, into the mike, and conjures up the bleak world of Weimar cinema from Louise Brooks to *Nosferatu*. The mixture of humour and horror, dignity and absurdity disturbs: Aggiss, back to the audience, pulsates at the knees, while her arms jerk above her head or reach between her thighs to her behind. Then she lies on her back, wagging the soles of her feet to the same beat. Laughter is guilty. Aggiss approaches the back wall, grabs and slithers in formalised desperation or, as if to obliterate all sentiment, presents herself square-on to the four walls, hard profile, front or back to us. Images are straightforwardly juxtaposed but sharply original and enhanced by Aggiss' arresting persona.

DV8 Physical Theatre run portentous programme notes about their disillusionment with the current state of dance, seeking artistic freedom and 'breaking down barriers' in 'dance, theatre, or personal politics'. Such sentiments are not uniquely theirs nor, indeed, is DV8's work particularly sophisticated in its politics. Far more interesting is the manner in which the group can present and enlighten their content.

Under the direction of Lloyd Newson, DV8 are collaborators, all currently working out themes of antagonism, sexual or otherwise. *My Sex, Our Dance*, devised and danced by Newson and Nigel Charnock, is an explicit example of gay art: the man and woman who canoodle and giggle at the café table on the stage's edge can openly express their lighter attachment, while the male lovers lock in an obsessive, forceful relationship, temperamental and erotic. The duet is brilliantly constructed with throws, tumbles and cartwheels in a partner's arms, phrases uncomfortably frozen into conclusion, a new couple-vocabulary developed and unnerving with real pain and aggression. There is, too, theatrical surprise: playing at last minute avoidance; suddenly a bed upstage established as a new territory, the landing pad for exhausted bellyflops.

If sentiment diminishes the duet's conclusion, more serious lapses occur in the quartet *Deep End*. This is an exploration of male/female relationships, especially the female uncertainty: women who seek tenderness and sex and yet, without male forwardness and force, need to be wanted, even possessed, but also to dominate and crush. There are fine moments, like the sequence in which Michelle Richecoeur and Newson enact the movement metaphor for an uneasy post-coital chat between Liz Ranken and Charnock, but often the power dissipates amid hamming, a self-indulgence (which Ranken confesses) and Streisand singing *Un homme et une femme*.

In such an enterprise as Spring Loaded, it is hardly surprising that programmes generally fail to reach the higher points of Divas or DV8 but our imaginations have already been charged twice in a fortnight, which is not bad going for a festival of this kind. □

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Black is bountiful

Naseem Khan

CONFERENCES TEND TO SINK, in retrospect, into a vague sort of sameness. Unusual, then, to remember one of nearly 20 years ago with the clarity with which I remember that of the Caribbean Artists' Movement (CAM). A striking and impressive collection of writers, visual artists and critics — who, in such cases as Wilson Harris, Edward Kamau Braithwaite, Aubrey Williams, are now more in the mainstream consciousness than they were then — CAM survived only five years. But the quality of the interrelationship and the effect it had is not something to forget.

CAM and the broadness and incision of its concerns, in our far more mean-spirited times, came back to me strongly recently, stirred first by a timely article in *Wasafiri* *(one of several absorbing pieces in this useful twice-yearly journal). Written by Anne Walmsley, one of CAM's founder-members, it was an interim account of her extended research project on CAM and was, at this stage, necessarily stronger on detail than analysis. When it is completed, however, it should be a major record of an alliance that, little though it has been recognised, was a foundation for the subsequent development of black arts in Britain.

The provision of a historical perspective is one of the main achievements of Prabhu Guptara's *Black British Literature* (Dangaroo Press £7.95): a list, in essence, of all the books that he has been able to ferret out written by black Britishers, from Obadiah Equiano and others in the 18th century to Salman Rushdie and Caryl Phillips today.

Lists lay themselves open to quibbling, and this one is no exception. Some of Guptara's inclusions are undoubtedly eccentric (Nirad Chaudhuri as black British?) and there are notable omissions. Michael X's autobiography, for instance, is not there, nor is G. V. Desani's remarkable cult book *All About H. Hatterr*. Critics will be able to make mincemeat of some of the value judgments in the annotations to the titles and in the extended Introduction (three adulatory pages on the Edward Braithwaite of *To Sir With Love* compared with nine lines on George Lamming is surely disproportionate). But, at the end of the day, the value of the exercise — one feature apart — far outweighs mistakes which can always be corrected.

The exception is the odd decision to include white writers who have written on black matters. So you will find Michael Hastings here in *Black British Writing*, Jeremy Sandford and Gillian Slovo. Categories are debatable things. There are writers in Guptara's book who would reject being tagged a Black British Writer (Hanif Kureishi has said vehemently he is simply a writer). But there can be no way in which to justify white writers here, particularly since Guptara says that none of them writes well about black people. Notwithstanding, it is a useful book, and a useful weapon in fighting stereotype. ('Do not the words "black Briton" immediately conjure up the image of a young man, not very highly educated, who is into sports, music and hashish?') It should also help to fight that other stereotype: that black British writing is purely propagandist in nature and intent.

Guptara comments on the number of small black publishing houses. His brief, however, does not allow him to mention an even more hopeful development: a black distribution network. Set up in Brixton by Ivor Osbourne in 1985, and called Bladestock, its genesis was in the very proliferation of black presses: Akira, New Beacon, Bogle L'Ouverture, Karia, Mantra and more. Originally, says Osbourne, a warmly committed advocate, he'd wanted to start a publishing imprint himself. But he'd quickly realised, looking at the weaknesses of the field (and with some prompting by the Greater London Enterprise Board) that books without adequate distribution were a nonsense.

Bladestock's first aim was to promote the works of the small black presses, but they rapidly ran into a problem. The titles were too few and too sporadic overall to make it commercially viable. 'So we had to modify our position radically, and aim at a more comprehensive basis for minority literature.' This has meant that they drew in relevant books from non-black publishers as well as books from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia.

The expansion of the original ground plan is no bad thing. First, it has allowed them to present a broader panorama of black writing. Second, with the expanded range, it has pushed them into another new direction. For, though wholesaling to bookshops still takes up to 50 per cent of their work, a growing emphasis has come to be placed on libraries. Bladestock can and does provide a full library service — from comprehensive advice to lamination — and is keen to increase that area.

It is, however, a slow business. The mechanics of the book trade are cumbersome, with a long gestation period before new ideas make their mark. Contracts often last a year before libraries can think of changing distributors. But turnover has grown and signs, says Osbourne, are good, with new GCSE syllabuses on the one hand and, on the other, what he sees as improved quality in the black publications themselves: 'In the past a lot of material was published because it was black, not because it was good.' To Bladestock's surprise, Osbourne adds, they have found mainstream bookshops not at all averse to carrying black literature: 'If it's attractively packaged, W. H. Smith will buy it.'

The day may be distant when, as Osbourne dearly hopes, writers of note such as Rushdie will choose to be published by black presses; but there is no doubt that the structural shift from CAM to Bladestock is a huge and healthy one. □

*Wasafiri *is published for ATCAL (Association for the Teaching of Caribbean, African, Asian and Associated Literatures) at 18 Aden Grove, London N16 9NJ.*

CINEMA

Man, myth and maggots

Judith Williamson

Gothic (18)
Lumiere
The Fly (18)
Odeons Leicester Square, Marble Arch

KEN RUSSELL HAS ALWAYS had a penchant for the wild and whacky doings of creative folk. Composers, dancers, sculptors, painters: in his films their work is scarcely as fascinating as their strange sex lives and bizarre behaviour. But with the Romantic poets he must surely have found his most sympathetic subjects, for Byron's exotic views on the lifestyle of the Artist seem to tally remarkably well with Russell's own.

Gothic is a dramatisation of the night in 1816 at Byron's villa where he, Shelley, Mary Godwin and her half-sister Claire, and Doctor John Polidori passed the time cooking up ghost stories, out of which eventually came Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The film draws attention to the creative processes through heavily scripted remarks about the vastness of the imagination and the force of fantasies from within; the period is hailed by Byron as 'an age of dreams and nightmares'.

However, if the imagination is so vast, it is a pity that Russell's repertoire of effects for evoking this internal sea of seething sexuality and terror is so limited and concrete. The inventory of pigs' heads, leeches, rats, skulls, snakes, creaking doors and trailing cobwebs, makes the film resemble nothing so much as a ride in an old-fashioned ghost train. The key to the gothic mode was the externalisation of inner drives and fears; and none of the film's effects is subtle or suggestive enough to give a sense of internality.

All this horror is used to psychologise Mary's creation of the Frankenstein story: the dead baby with the Boris Karloff face and her apparent premonition of Shelley's death by drowning are rolled in to explain or interpret her tale of a creator whose creation goes out of control. The application of this idea to Artists is played on endlessly: 'We are the gods now . . . we call ourselves creators . . . but the punishment is . . . we have created — what?'

One is tempted to answer: a banal film. For the problem with *Gothic* is its inability to get beyond the graphic level — as if the only way to evoke the terrifying or sublime were to bung in more maggots.

A further liability is the self-consciousness of the dialogue — 'For God's sake, Mary!' 'But God is already dead, Shelley!' — and the bizarrely anachronistic line, as his friends notice Shelley hitting the opium again: 'I can handle it.' The film could work as an extended anti-drug ad. It also works as kitsch: there was much audience hilarity when I saw it. But the camp level is spoiled by the portrayal of Polidori, whose homosexual love for Byron is turned into an orgy of self-mutilation and disgust. Ultimately, *Gothic* is not very gothic; it is

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o sexually explicit. If the repressed positively *aunts* itself down every corridor, it is hard to get a nse of that frisson between the inner and outer hich characterised the Romantic modes.

I say modes because the Gothic was extremely ose to its less currently fashionable sibling, the ntimental, which evoked pity where the former oked fear. The tenacity of Romantic discourses our present culture can be seen in, for example, ır responses to disease (and specifically Aids) here pity and terror are two sides of the same in. Cronenberg's **The Fly** is another curiously aphic film, most interesting for its suggestion of different response to bodily sickness; though in preoccupation with a range of disjunctions tween inner and outer — with particular ference to sexuality — it is placed firmly on thic territory. Its hero, Seth Brundle (Jeff oldblum) is a scientist whose single-minded volvement in his work makes him appear 'pure', most non-sexual at the start of the film, when he vites a science journalist (Geena Davis) to see his traordinary invention, a computerised letransporter, and overcomes her scepticism by ansporting one of her black lacy stockings.

These transporting chambers bear an intriguing semblance to Reich's orgone machines; and deed a Reichian sense of the energising operties of sex echoes throughout the film. In s 'virginal' state Brundle is at an impasse with his oject, being unable to understand 'flesh' — as e script carefully tells us, several times. owever, after sleeping with his new woman iend he finds he can transport living matter: sex is an enabling function. At the same time it is the ırker side of sexual entanglement that ansforms him more radically; in a rage of nnecessary) sexual jealousy he transports mself and fails to notice a fly in the machine — ith the result that he becomes genetically merged ith it. The immediate effects of this are, again, rangely Reichian: Brundle finds enormous serves of energy and strength, wants to fuck all e time and becomes very self-assertive, timately aggressive, stomping around bare-ested in a leather jacket instead of the shirts and s that made him so charmingly 'straight' at the ginning. He has swapped science for sex: iowledge has been the gateway to his sexual lationship and sex the gateway to completing his ientific invention. The final outcome of the two gether is his hideous transformation into a giant .

Of course, what this fable most resembles is the ankenstein story — but with a twist. For undle is both inventor and monster; the two les are elided, neatly bringing back together the o sides of 'human nature' that gothic literature lit. Mary Shelley, however, thought that the ventor would recoil in horror from his esumptuous creations. Brundle, after initial spondency, becomes remarkably exhilarated: ll become something that never existed before', enthuses, flinging himself into his disease with eat humour, bottling the parts of his body that ll off, video-ing his eating habits for future ience lessons. There is something not gothic, but istential, in his excitement at becoming his own eation and even if the film's simpler level of rror brings us back to pity and terror in the end, is momentary glimpse beyond Romantic self-athing is both timely and refreshing. □

TELEVISION

C.O.U.N.T.R.Y.

Hugo Williams

ANYONE WITH EARS may doubt the idea that jazz and blues originated in Africa; they may not know that Jimmie Rodgers, the very first Country singer, used to be worshipped as a god in parts of Nigeria. Patrick Matthews' likeably easy-going ramble round the Country music scene, **A-Z of C & W with Hank Wangford** (C4), dug up an all-too-short recording of (what sounded like) 'Hello Jimmie Rodgers', a wonderful, sad little warble by the African branch of the Jimmie Rodgers Appreciation Society, revealed here as a bunch of broadly-smiling, bare-breasted teenage girls. It was one of those moments.

Jimmie Rodgers, 'The Singing Brakeman', was a poor railroad worker who died of TB after just six years of recognition in the Thirties. According to Wangford, the Africans liked the way he tacked little blues yodels on the end of his songs. Hank Wangford himself is a London family-planning specialist otherwise known as Dr Sam Hutt. Perhaps his jokey stage persona — 'I'll play yellow grass, green grass, any colour grass' — will provide a necessary bridge for non-believers, but one could have wished that his own singing style, of which we were allowed a fair segment in this first programme, could have appropriated the form half as freely as those girls in Africa.

It must have been hard to know where to start pasting up the legends. A free-ranging alphabetical approach, as in Nick Coleman's recent *Observer Magazine* round-up of jazz, may turn out to have been a fertile way of doing the impossible. (I am assured there is a 'hidden agenda' available). Particularly interesting was the 'brothers' theme, starting with the Everlys and working backwards through the Blue Sky Boys ('Alabama') and the great Charlie and Ira Louvin from the 'religious belt'. All brother acts end up not speaking, we were told. Ira Louvin, who died in the classic car crash a few short years after his Grand Ole Opry breakthrough, was especially temperamental. 'He would stomp on a mandolin if it went out of tune at the wrong moment, then sweep the pieces up afterwards and patiently piece it back together again at home.' When someone told him his mandolin was the reason his records didn't sell, his chosen instrument was dropped from the line-up, but its banishment broke Ira's will to live.

If you can stand Blue Grass, the best clip of the show was The Foggy Mountain Boys, Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt, singing 'Don't Let Your Deal Go Down' with that deadpan mountain cool of theirs. And it was fun to hear the old black blues master Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown turning his hand to a wonderfully loose-stringed fast fiddle solo guesting in Wangford's own band at the Mean Fiddler in Harlesden, proving that Country is not the exclusive preserve of rednecks (Fats Domino, Charley Pride, Ray Charles, etc.).

Wangford's association with Billy Bragg was

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BY RICHARD STRAUSS

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less happy. The pair wanted, unwisely I think, to say something apt about country 'n' politics, so a clip of the great Merle Haggard singing one of his redneck anthems 'The Fighting Side of Me') (1970), was dragged out as a hook: 'I don't mind them switching sides and standing up for things they believe in, but when they're running down our country they're walking on the fighting side of me.' 'Well, what do two liberal-minded socialist boys like us think of that?' Bragg and Wangford asked one another. 'To us that's real jingoism. How can we like it? Well, we. . . observe it. I think we're in trouble here.' They were. Not only are songs like Haggard's beautiful 'Okie From Muskogee' a small cry in a musical hubbub to the contrary, but Messrs Wangford and Bragg's opinion on the subject is largely irrelevant in the context of another country's folk music, not to say cheeky. They'd have done better to stand back and let the obnoxious sight of Nixon playing a very un-Country 'God Bless America' at the opening of the New Opry in 1970 — 'Country music stands up for the flag' — get on with the job of condemning itself via the more reliable medium of bad taste.

These are worse things in Country music than blue-collar right wingery: at the end of the first lively programme we were assured that there is a movement among the younger country singers to purge the form of the sticky-sweet over-production of later years and make it raw again. They'd have done better to put up Jason and the Scorchers in this vein. Brave Combo, doing their best to rock up 'Cold Cold Heart', were seriously (and unfairly) upstaged as the credits rolled by the original version by the song's composer, Hank Williams, who sounds more and more like a rock 'n' roll singer with every passing year. A subjective recommendation.

Brother Ramon is a Welsh Franciscan friar who was once Anglican chaplain to Glasgow University. He is a well-known figure on the motorway network as he hitches around the country spreading the Gospel. After his amazing appearance on **Encounter** (ITV) he may well become a familiar figure on a wider network.

Although he wasn't when he was being filmed as one, Ramon is a sometime hermit and made a convincing case for this abstraction of life. We saw him striding purposefully about his wonderfully purposeless duties on a Welsh mountainside, lighting fires to the Lord, contemplating sheep, jogging, bookbinding and fixing himself little Masses surrounded by icons — a thing the Church doesn't 'encourage', apparently.

What was his purpose in becoming a hermit? He wasn't sure. 'God's a bit of a joker. He doesn't always tell you what he's up to. I'm very gregarious and it's a blow to my pride. It's a bit scary and it's a bit wonderful too.' Was there any danger involved? 'Yes, but I'm a bit dotty already and that's a safeguard against going dottier.' I had my doubts about this safeguard when I saw him touring his 'Stations of the Cross' marked like a treasure hunt with pieces of paper saying 'Christ Crucified' etc., but I have to admit that Brother Ramon is the only cleric I have ever seen who reminded me of a human being. □

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Reds in the bed

Maria Margaronis

A programme to light Norman Tebbit's eyes is filling the screens in the USA

LAST WEEK, on prime-time television, America fell beneath the Soviet boot. Lenin's portrait hung in the White House, musical comedy was banned and choirs of red-capped schoolboys sang the International. Congress was massacred by Commie thugs; the dome of the Capitol collapsed in spectacular flames.

Amerika, ABC Television's $40m. wallow in sentimental jingoism, was the long-awaited television event of the season. Based on an idea by former Nixon speech writer Ben Stein, the series was originally planned to appease the better-dead-than-red critics of *The Day After*, ABC's 1983 docudrama about the aftermath of nuclear war. Battening on a rich borscht of controversy and hype, it swelled to its final fourteen-and-a-half hour length in time for the February sweeps — the period when the networks measure their audience and set their advertising rates.

Worrying about television is something of a national sport here and samizdat copies of *Amerika*'s scrip were percolating across the country months before launch. Juicy quotes were biopsied in local papers, peace groups put out protest letters; conservatives complained that the series was soft on the Soviets. The United Nations, whose peacekeeping forces play a starring role as Soviet pawns, threatened to sue. A stiff note about the show's appropriation of the UN's blue symbol was sent to ABC by assorted right-wing luminaries, including Jeane Kirkpatrick and Alexander Haig. Chrysler pulled its advertising in a panic. But the Soviet Union, which had initially threatened trouble for ABC's Moscow bureau, expressed an interest in buying the show. At least the commissars at Moscow TV seem to have a sense of humour. They could hope for no better crash course in the American nightmare.

ABC's vision of the Soviet United Nations of Amerika ten years after the fall of the free world has everything you would expect: a quisling president in Washington, KGB colonels in the CIA's old haunt and an American gulag in — where else? — Odessa, Texas. The country is occupied by UN special service unit troops dressed like futuristic bikers, who go about fire-bombing farms and flattening exile camp-sites beneath black tanks. The flag is banned, the press is muzzled and teenagers are brainwashed Clockwork-Orange style in psychiatric hospitals. As America lies dying, a heroic group of freedom fighters arises in the heartland . . . On the whole, though, *Amerika* owes more to *Dynasty* than *Rambo* or *Red Dawn*. Too deeply xenophobic to pay much attention to the Russians, it's not so much a war epic as a soap opera pushing every conservative cliché about the American way of life. The plot's slow wheels turn on family quarrels and tearful man-to-man reunions. Resistance leader Devin Milford (played by a broody Kris Kristofferson) is the rebellious scion of an old Nebraska farm family straight out of Reagan's vision of the American *volk*; the shots of the clapboard ancestral home set among rolling, misty hills could have been lifted wholesale from the Great Communicator's 1984 campaign film.

Apart from Devin's high-school sweetheart Amanda, now the lumpish and loyal wife of a well-meaning collaborator, all the prominent women in *Amerika* are sluts and sell-outs. Alethea Milford, once raped by UNSSU soldiers, can't stop going back to their vicious East German Commander for more; Kimberley, an actress in the outlaw theatre, advances her career in the bed of charming KGB Colonel Andrei Denisov. Devin's ex-wife Marian, a cross between Jackie Kennedy and Lady Macbeth , has slept her way to power with an elderly Russian general.

Like the commie-bashing epics of the Fifties, *Amerika* is really about the enemy within. Apart from some mumbo-jumbo about an electromagnetic pulse, we never find out how the Soviets engineered their peaceful takeover — only that they were helped by the nation's moral disarmament. 'You lost your country before we ever got here,' explains Colonel Denisov, and Devin Milford puts his populist finger on the problem: 'We lost it with our loss of purpose, our loss of vision . . . we must blame it on our breaking into a nation of groups — special interests, corporate interests, minority interests, women against men.' By splashing around some key words and phrases, *Amerika* identifies all socialist or even social democratic ideas with the foreign oppressor. The Soviet youth groups are called Lincoln Brigades, the name of the American units that fought in the Spanish Civil War. School-children are made to spout outrageous lies: 'When Americans conquered the country, they killed Indians who had been living on the land peacefully for thousands of years.' And the wicked Marian makes the point explicitly: 'There were people who never participated in the American dream . . . many of us took the opportunity to create an America we believed in.'

When *Amerika* was first thought up in 1983, the Reagan imperium was at its height. Since then, Irangate has taken the starch out of the patriotic spine and diluted Washington's self-righteous bombast. No matter. Like all good propaganda, *Amerika* is overdetermined enough to fit a range of political moments. In fact, its picture of a fallen nation recovering its past to rise again is even more appropriate in 1987. 'Fear is keeping us away from believing in ourselves, believing we can still be Americans,' cries Kris Kristofferson shortly before he's martyred. For fear read peaceniks, bleeding hearts and wingeing liberals. □

Maria Margaronis is Associate Literary Editor of The Nation.

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Books

hrista Wolf: finding new connections with the West

EAST GERMANY

The East is read

rica Carter

iterature in the GDR has come a long ay since boy-meets-tractor heroics. The ict that we don't see much of it may be iore the fault of British publishers than erman censors

ULTURAL DEBATES on the British left now em dominated by possible responses to hatcherist visions of an 'enterprise culture'. The abour Party is busy examining strategies to vitalise what it has learned to call the 'culture dustries'. But precedents are few; and there is tle interest in returning to what was once called ctually existing socialism' for inspiration.

The German Democratic Republic, in the most eral sense one of the most enclosed of the arsaw Pact states, has been regarded in this ntext with particular suspicion. Left cultural change between Britain and the GDR has ditionally been managed at trade-union and party-political level. Children of Communist Party families may remember healthy but spartan summers in Young Pioneer camps, weeks walking in the Harz mountains or the forests of Thuringia. In the minds of this rising generation at least, the GDR is associated with old political orthodoxies, or unfashionable organised pleasures.

New connections, if made at all, are forged on the margins of traditional left culture. The writer Christa Wolf has been profoundly (though by no means solely) influenced by western feminism; her work is published here by Virago. Rudolf Bahro attracted British attention for his involvement in the West German Green movement; more recently, Readers International published Monika Maron's *Flight of Ashes*, an exposé and indictment of GDR environmental pollution. On the filthy Bitterfeld power plant in the GDR's industrial heartland, Maron writes, 'Who has the right to make people work in last century's conditions because they need a synthetic sweater or a certain kind of bug killer? . . . Is that progress, Luise?' The question is addressed to Maron's fictive editor; it could as easily speak to British proponents of economic growth as the sole route to socialism.

Like the work of Wolf and Bahro, Maron's writing meshes with the concerns of a western social movement — in her case, environmentalism — that engages with, but remains critical of organised socialism. Since the early Seventies GDR writing has explored questions tabooed in the era of socialist realism (otherwise dubbed 'boy-meets-tractor literature'): questions of history — the limits to progress — or of identity, its loss and displacement. Simultaneously in the West, feminism, anti-racism, the gay, ecology and peace movements have challenged the rigidity of the socialist cultural vision. The work of GDR writers taken up in Britain marks out areas of East-West political and cultural convergence; Bahro's work refocuses hopes for democratic socialism, Maron ('one day I'll set up my own house community with mutual friends') echoes community activism's collectivist utopias.

But British attention continues to be selective. Most publishers remain cautious of translation: Christa Wolf was first translated in the United States, and Stephen Hermlin's novels, or Irmtraud Morgner's epic, anti-phallocratic fantasies, are still unavailable in England. Ignorance of German writing is commonly ascribed to British 'insularity' — a mythical character trait sustained in fact by more palpable cultural formations. As Martin Chalmers pointed out in a recent *New Statesman* (*NS* 9.1.87) new ideas are excluded from British publishing by a combination of unadventurous reviewing and commercial tunnel-vision; the problems are exacerbated on the left by dogged traditionalism.

The situation is reversed in GDR perspectives on Britain. Even where information is in short supply, interest is lively and opinions critically perceptive. The GDR is unique among Eastern European states for its easy access to Western media. With the exception of the far south-east, all regions are reached by West German television — and media information is boosted by family or professional contacts. Places and faces from the Federal Republic are familiar in text and image — but always physically distant.

This gulf between knowledge of and access to the West produces very particular tensions between official representations of the GDR state and the private consciousness of its citizens. While the main national newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, reproduces its round of production figures and party speeches (arts coverage is minimal), private conversations circulate around culture's experimental questions: personal choices and freedoms, daily anxieties or repressions. Western lifestyle provides the yardstick against which individual freedom is assessed; popular desire is moulded by Western advertising, in an economy that lacks the resources to match Western commodity production.

The GDR has failed to date to bridge the cultural gap between actually existing socialism and capitalism's glittering consumerist idyll. But since the mid-Seventies the State — working by the safety-valve principle — has mapped out areas of cultural activity where dissent can be voiced, and hostility dissipated. Opposition is incorporated into official cultural programmes; achievements of such as Christa Wolf, or playwright Heiner Müller, are cautiously, but nonetheless publicly celebrated. ▷

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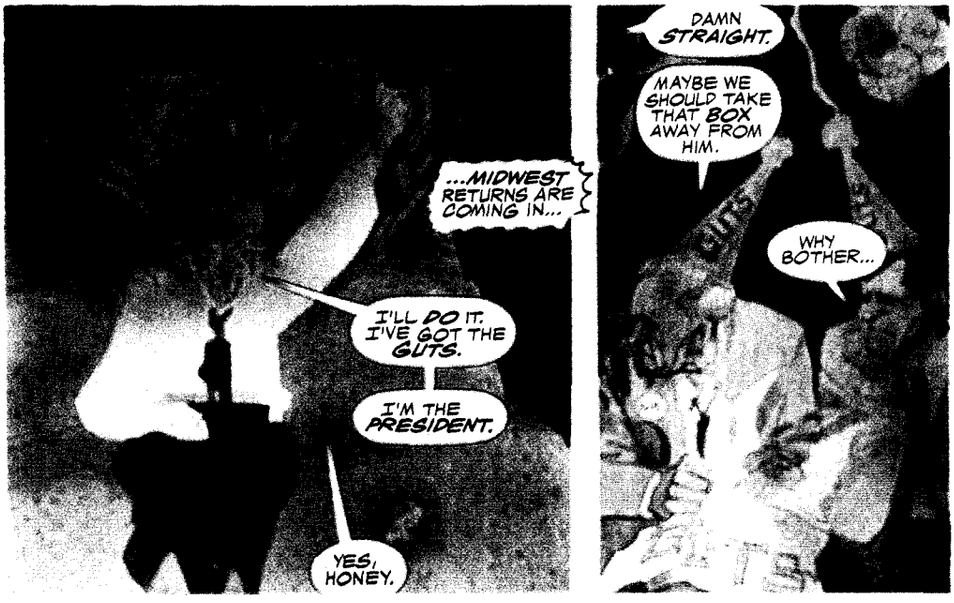
One such public forum, in which the subjective contradictions of GDR life are permitted to become visible, is literature. Contemporary GDR writing has turned its attention from the world of production to themes of selfhood and identity; fiction today explores fantasy and sexuality, or unearths subterranean histories of everyday life under socialism. As in the West, the new literature of identity has been pioneered by women: by Christa Wolf, beginning with her 1968 novel *Christa T.*; by Maxie Wander (though her themes were different, the impact of her interviews with ordinary women was comparable to that of the *Hite Report* in Britain); by Christa Reinig; poet Sarah Kirsch; statistician-turned-fiction-writer Helga Königsdorf; Helga Schütz and others.

In a country marked by sexual orthodoxy (homosexuality is legally permitted, but socially and medically pathologised), fiction has explored tabooed desires and sexual identities. When I first visited the GDR five years ago, I was told gay writing was non-existent. Today, the Aufbau publishing house describes a forthcoming novel by Ingeborg Alt as tracing the transgressive desires of one young woman and validating the sexual passions of her lesbian friend. The same publisher lists two collections by the gay poet Ulrich Berkes. And with the gradual publication of Freud's works over the last two years, writers and artists have turned anew to the unconscious; in their performance *Dream-Prison*, the experimental theatre group Zinnober merge formal experiment with a journey through the horrors of real or imagined imprisonment.

There has always been a precarious edge to GDR cultural innovation. In 1976, the US-funded West Berlin radio station, RIAS, sent an undercover reporter to broadcast live from a nightclub known as a forum for dissenting voices. A stunning piece of Western blundering: the club was raided and closed the following day. Today, however, the State is committed to greater leniency. Many writers have unrestricted passage across the border (hence the GDR neologism *sich ausschreiben* — writing oneself out). The Academy of Arts runs a bi-annual forum for young artists, inviting selected cultural functionaries to inspect new developments (the wider public is excluded). Official policy commits the State to the pursuit of originality and excellence; but it remains wary of socio-political disruption born of literary expressions of disaffection. Contentious writing is certainly tolerated; but overly 'negative' works — *Flight of Ashes*, for example — remain unpublished, while small print-runs allow books to be withdrawn at short notice. The GDR state is learning to engage with diversity; but it shows the same excessive caution as many of its counterparts in Western socialism. □


...MIDWEST RETURNS ARE COMING IN...
I'LL DO IT. I'VE GOT THE GUTS.
I'M THE PRESIDENT.
YES, HONEY.
DAMN STRAIGHT.
MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE THAT BOX AWAY FROM HIM.
WHY BOTHER...

They had to move on eventually from finding satanic rites in Heavy Metal albums. In various parts of the USA, moral majority campaigners have started attacking the new wave of comic books. Prime target on their hitlist is the politically iffy but beautifully painted *Electra Assassin*, a heady brew of female ninja, CIA-woman-dressed-as-a-nun and deranged and/or drunken cyborgs, which gets into some areas of genuine unease in its exposition of the psychosexual undercurrents of its OTT thriller plot. But any adolescent who can pick up on the semiology of helicopters drawn like fetish boots is clearly hopeless already. Equally important in the minds of these critics is the fact that *Electra*, like Alan Moore's *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *Dark Knight*, is filled with 'moral ambivalence', criticises US policy in Central America and promotes disrespectful attitudes to those in authority, especially Republican presidents (above). The panic reaction of comic giants DC and Marvel has been to announce a ratings system. Writers and artists, notably Miller and Moore, who fear a ratings system will make it easier for censors to target comics of which they disapprove, have announced that, after current contracts expire, they will not work for any company that institutes ratings. And Warners, who own recording studios as well as DC, are not pleased by a concession that makes ratings systems on rock albums more plausible. *Electra Assassin*, *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight* are available here from Forbidden Planet and other good comic shops. (Roz Kaveney)

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Wide of the mark

Ann Scott

The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney
MARCIA WESTKOTT *Yale* £17.50

THERE HAS LONG BEEN an interest in the psychoanalytic work of Karen Horney in the United States, both among the educated lay public and within the more recent women's studies movement. It's easy to understand: Horney saw herself increasingly as a disseminator of a broadly psychoanalytic view of human conflict, while protesting the 'masculine basis' of contemporary civilisation. And it is as a sociologist rather than a clinician that she tends to be taken up now.

Indeed it is as a professional sociologist in the USA that Marcia Westkott has explored a combination of psychological themes running through Horney's later, 'gender-neutral' work: anger, dependency, devaluation, detachment and sexualisation. Westkott was drawn to Horney's thinking, she says, because she had problems with Nancy Chodorow's influential view of the specificity of the mother-daughter bond and wanted to find a theoretical basis for a new social psychology of women: one that would account not only for women's internalisation of their 'devalued' status, but for their opposition to it. On its own terms it is a well-argued, well-constructed account, faithful to Horney's texts and sensitive to the reticences or ambiguities of their expression.

Even so, it strikes me as a very flawed work. I can't help noticing that, although Freud is taken to task for 'postulating universal internal processes', Westkott herself goes in for generalisations as breathtaking as any in Freud's writing itself. Thus we have the spectacle, within a discussion of Jeffrey Masson's polemical work on the seduction theory, of 'the wider reality that all girls were sexualised within the middle-class family as an everyday exercise of power'. Here Westkott fails to draw a distinction between a possibility (however unacknowledged) and the enactment of a possibility. That is, in speaking of the prerogative of gender — which she calls the socially sanctioned right of all males to sexualise all females, regardless of age or status — she confuses a discourse with a practice.

Running parallel to this attitude towards the empirical 'reality' of girlhood sexualisation — which, rightly, she distinguishes in principle from incest — is Westkott's tendency to see scholarship, once she has chosen her sources, as a seamless web of influence and lineage. Take, for example, the following:

> This parental use of children has been the concern of psychoanalyst Alice Miller, whose work extends Horney's in some illuminating ways. Miller does not refer to Horney, although she does cite D. W. Winnicott, whose analysis of child development is built on concepts of the real and idealised selves that resemble Horney's categories. Indeed, Miller's work can be read as an interpretation of Winnicott that illuminates some of Horney's ideas implied by Winnicott's analysis.

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have quoted this short paragraph in full because illustrates the character of Westkott's approach well, ignoring as it does the conceptual fferences which separate these writers far more ian they bring them together. The premise of lice Miller's work on sexual abuse, for instance, now wholly at odds with psychoanalysis (even if wasn't when she wrote *The Drama of the Gifted hild*) and I am not sure how our understanding of ie construction of the psyche is advanced by eating family trees of implication and semblance alone.

In the same way, Westkott has presented the ork as a self-sufficient argument, without iscussing the classes of evidence that she has used. hus Jean Strouse's biography of Alice James, me passages from Virginia Woolf's utobiographical writing, a lot of mainstream cial history, Karen Horney's personal perience and some of her clinical material: erything *seems* to have the same weight. But, if is really were the case, then a random sampling f any mass-circulation women's weekly would ndermine this book's sociological claim that 'the aughter's own need for nurturing is viewed as a oublesome annoyance' — for *Woman* and *oman's Own* abound with stories of maternal nderness as well as maternal conflict. Surely the oint is that it doesn't work like this? So I am not ying that the sociological claim is invalid, only at Westkott should have weighed up the fferent kinds of source: what they do, how they terrelate. When it comes to clinical evidence — many ways the least transparent of all — I am minded of Richard Wollheim's simple mment, in a radio portrait of Melanie Klein: he facts are very difficult of access.' One would t know it from Marcia Westkott's account. □

in Scott is working on a study of women psychoanalysts be published by the Women's Press.

HUMOUR

Padded sell

lick Kimberley

wimming to Cambodia
PALDING GRAY *Picador* £3.50
ating your Mom
AN FRAZIER *Hamish Hamilton* £7.95

HESE TWO BOOKS are by two very different merican humorists. Spalding Gray is a public erformer, Ian Frazier a columnist for the *New orker*. Frazier's collection comes plainly ackaged; you might just mistake it for a genuine lvice manual. No such mistake with Gray: his ont cover finds him striking a pose suggesting lmonishment. Finger waving in the air, he's ying something like, 'Now just listen to me.'

What Frazier's and Gray's covers tell us is, spectively, 'This is low-key, offbeat humour' id 'This is hip'. The facts are confirmed when the viewer receives Frazier's book with a simple slip lvising publication date, while *Swimming to ambodia* arrives with a glossily printed brochure hich would pass muster as a programme for one of Gray's theatrical performances.

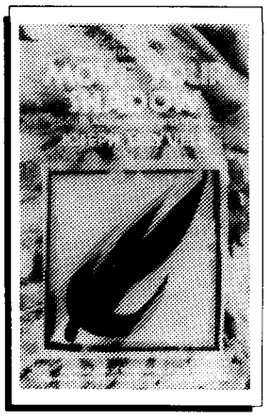
There is, of course, a marketing strategy at work here: in hardback (although hardbacks priced at £7.95 are increasingly rare), *Dating Your Mom* already looks substantial enough. As an original paperback, **Swimming to Cambodia** will by-pass critics who demand hardbacks — unless they're alerted to the fact that this is a *significant* book. As has often been remarked, this is perhaps the only country whose culture still revolves around ancient reviewers' prejudices. But it's easy to take against a book which the publishers push too hard, even if there are good reasons to push it, so I determined to look for the good in Spalding Gray, hoping to find links with that important tendency in post-war American writing towards performance, writing whose presentation on the page already suggests a score. I was thinking in particular of the poet David Antin, who has also evolved a monologue form, partially improvised, in which a private poetic language expands to embrace every aspect of the public.

Such hopes were thwarted in the reading of the pieces in *Swimming to Cambodia*, all developed as performance monologues and only transcribed when performances had defined their shape. On the page, we of course miss the nuances of gesture and intonation which illuminate, perhaps even change their meaning. But we gain the chance to stop the spiel and think about what's being said. I haven't seen Gray perform, but am prepared to believe he's persuasive, capable of winning over the most sceptical audience. On the page, he simply comes across as a cartoon version of the self-dramatising, all-American alternative culturist. From primal screams to Bhaghwan Shree Rajneesh, from Perfect Moments to tripped-out fantasies, he lazily spews up the world in an endless burble of 'me-me-me'.

Performance art as a genre consistently risks self-dramatisation: the audience is forced to watch personal dilemmas, reactions, opinions presented as drama. But the best performance art goes beyond self to something mythic, not the trivial which obsesses Gray. Of course, there's something ironic here; but what a feeble weapon irony is if its aim is merely to guy performer and audience's stoned complacencies: Cheech and Chong did that more wittily nearly 20 years ago. Gray trots around the globe, the archetypal tourist trying to make himself at home; and then, worse than showing us his slides, he proceeds to talk about his trips endlessly.

The two-part title piece is typical; it relates the author's experiences filming in Thailand for Roland Joffe's *The Killing Fields*, in which he had a part. Gray generalises outrageously about the Thais, who, we're told, 'have a word, *sanug*, which loosely translated, means "fun". And they never do anything that isn't *sanug* — if it isn't *sanug*, they won't touch it.' Worse still, Gray almost *celebrates* the fact that millions of dollars are being spent so that European and American actors and audiences can anguish in safety about the plight of suffering Cambodia. The contradictions never seem to occur to him; he

MOVE YOUR SHADOW
Joseph Lelyveld



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happily swims around in the warm sea, looking for the Perfect Moment that will tell him it's time to go home. If none of the other pieces here is so smug, none of them suggests, either, that this is a voice offering any sort of opposition — to anything.

Slight though they are, the pieces in **Dating your Mom** are comparatively refreshing and certainly funnier. Frazier's range is small and his technique repetitive: one set of cultural preoccupations absurdly transposed on another. Hence, obsessive Bloomsburyitis mingles with the worst sort of rock LP sleeve-note in 'The Bloomsbury Group Live at the Apollo', in which Virginia Woolf admits, 'The hardest thing about being a member of the Bloomsbury Group is learning how to be a person at the same time you're being a star.' A similar juxtaposition leads to 'LGA-ORD', in which Samuel Beckett captains a plane and tries to talk his passengers through the trip. Light, slight and definitively aimed at people who read a lot of magazines, *Dating Your Mom* nevertheless hits its targets far more often than *Swimming to Cambodia* — and with much more brevity. □

FANTASY

The mighty Finn

Colin Greenland

I WAS GOING to say that **The Wizards and the Warriors** (Corgi, £2.95) by Hugh Cook should not be confused with **The Wizard and the Warlord** (Corgi, £2.50) by Elizabeth H. Boyer, but I had second thoughts. Perhaps it should, perhaps they are meant to be interchangeable. Perhaps Corgi hope many people may buy one by mistake for the other and end up with both.

Not that this is duplicity. Both books are written clearly and emphatically for readers who already know everything they contain: hand-to-hand combat and magical extravaganzas under cosmic auspices in romantic Dark Ages. As Michael Moorcock is fond of observing, fantasy fiction these days resembles a folk industry, like carving souvenir dolls. Everything must be as generic and conventional as possible: nothing unexpected, nothing deviant.

The Wizards and the Warriors is about a mysterious stone of awesome destructive power (whereas *The Wizard and the Warlord* is about a mysterious locked box of awesome destructive power). It is in evil hands; so another stone must be got to counter it. Now this is a workable notion for a story. We are familiar with the theory that ultimate weapons are to be multiplied. But there is a problem, isn't there? So much power: which any coward or criminal could use, given the chance . . . They would never have to make the true warrior's commitment to death, but they, standing at the centre of sanitary destruction, would wreck entire civilizations.

Well, that's one problem; and not one that can be resolved in the book any more than outside. Yet the doll must be finished. The magic stone must be a regulation talisman, so that the goodies can save the world by mobilising a mountain, which they ride up the road. A certain facetiousness is intrinsic to Cook's tone as he spins gold into straw, 544 pages, two more volumes announced, another 17 promised, well wouldn't you?

At first glance Paul Hazel's **The Finnbranch** (Sphere, £4.95) resembles the doll, in full traditional costume: heroic cover art (macho Celt with golden barque), epic blurb and testimonial ('wonderful, magical') from Marion Zimmer Bradley. It's even a trilogy, 591 pages, here in omnibus form. The first book, *Yearwood*, is archaic and grim and tells of a young man's quest for power. Finn is born among witches, his name and fatherhood concealed in riddles so convoluted we may already suspect a book will not be enough to unravel them. Divinely wounded in the wood, forth he goes in a blizzard of portents to grapple up the lordship that is his destiny, and so on.

The second book, *Undersea*, complicates things. Finn is not only the king's true son, but also sometimes his grandson, and sometimes the king himself. Sometimes he is an old king in an old hall, telling us this story. Time spools back upon itself, the text dividing and overlapping like Celtic filigree. Under the sea is the kingdom of the dead, poignantly all too like this world.

Hazel is good at heroic loneliness, the fear and resentment of the folk. 'To them it was all wonder and gibberish and women changing into birds.' We can sympathise. Celtic twilight becomes an impenetrable fog of gloomy masculine self-regard. 'Even the tide goes back and forth. How then shall the heart of a king keep from turning?' Oh the blarney of it.

What clouds book three, *Winterking*, is, astonishingly, smoke: from railway engines; cigars; houses torched by insurgent natives. *Winterking* is set in an America of some kind, some time after the Great War. A reclusive and itinerant young millionaire, latest scion of a line of such, leaves the University of New Awanux to assume control of the estate. Odd circumstances and disruptions precede and follow him. Questions are murmured, forgotten ghosts stirred. A young bank clerk dies strangely in a railway carriage. Rash scholars, fancifully compounding anomalies in linguistics, archaeology and geology, claim to detect traces of a prior creation. The millionaire, we discover, is a character from *Undersea*, not Finn, another, a self-effacing immortal, a manipulative messiah. Arrangements are made, once more, for the end of the world.

Hazel's faculty for cryptic understatement, almost fatal for the comprehensibility of *Undersea*, also permits him to reproduce the niceties, both delicate and foolish, of old New England. He invokes Melville and Hawthorne: *Winterking*'s stately apocalypse puts him in their tradition, in company with John Crowley and John Gardner, and Thomas Pynchon even, at some distance from Marion Zimmer Bradley. *The Finnbranch* makes one think of the novel James Joyce is said to have been planning when he died, a novel set under the sea; but then *The Finnbranch* is astonishing for its arrogance as well as its virtuosity. Why there hasn't been a lot of fuss about Paul Hazel I don't know. Because of the camouflage, perhaps. □

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FICTION

Raising the stakes

Malcolm Imrie

Gilles and Jeanne
MICHEL TOURNIER trans. ALAN SHERIDAN
Methuen £9.95

'GILLES, THE ACCUSED, just as a dog returns to its vomit, cruelly murdered and caused to be murdered many boys and girls . . . with which children he committed the sodomitical sin . . . on account of this sin of unnatural abuse, earthquakes, famines and plagues occur here on earth according to divine justice.'

This illustration of 15th-century ecclesiastical jurisprudence — proof of James Anderton's impeccable theological pedigree — comes not from *Gilles and Jeanne*, whose prose is rarely so vivid, but from the extraordinary transcripts of Gilles de Rais' trial in 1440, where one of France's richest warlords, who had fought alongside Joan of Arc at Orléans and was renowned for his charity, stood accused of heresy, apostasy, sacrilege, sodomy and, in the separate civil court, the murder of around 140 children. These transcripts recently appeared in an English edition (*Laughter for the Devil*, introduced and translated by Reginald Myatte, Farleigh Dickinson, £14.95). The testimonies they contain, and Gilles' horribly detailed and fervently contrite confession, have been the subject of speculation in France for a century; they create, as Myatte puts it, a 'diptych of Paradise and hell', in which Gilles fills the central position on both panels, model knight and monster. Around the time of Joan's canonisation, there was even a forlorn attempt to rehabilitate him. Tournier's is one of many fictional interpretations of his life, lower on fiction and heavier on interpretation than most. An uncharacteristically pedagogic distillation of unusually rich historical sources.

Gilles and Jeanne is Tournier's shortest novel (barely 20,000 words) and, despite its epistemological party-pieces, by far his slightest. Though a myth of Joan sustains its structure (Gilles worships her androgynous purity, is transformed by her martyrdom into seeking an opposite path to immolation/redemption), she's an almost incidental character in a narrative whose dominant voices belong to Gilles' confessor, Blanchet, and Prelati, his alchemist. History suggests Prelati was indeed instrumental in Gilles' downfall, and no mean magus: he successfully invoked the devil as a serpent, a young man and a flock of crows. Here his mysteries are traded for a glib embodiment of the Florentine *quattrocento*,

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malign harbinger of renaissance clarity in the gothic forests of the Vendée. Blanchet is his butt. Shown Donatello's anatomically precise *David*, he shrugs his shoulders like the Peterborough centurion: "'So that's modern art,'' he grumbled. ''No, really, I can't see what . . .'''

The Tuscan spring versus the Vendée's 'eternal autumn' is only one of the portentous oppositions condensed into these brief, parabolic chapters. It's not surprising that Tournier, so heavily influenced by Bachelard's poetic science of myths and affinities, should be attracted to Gilles — as a character-study of medieval cosmology *in extremis*, but also as Bluebeard, legendary child-murderer. Pity and pleasure, innocence and cruelty, 'the light of heaven and the flames of hell': Tournier can recapitulate all the well-worn dualisms that in his greatest novels, *The Erl-King* and *Gemini*, were renewed by an apparently boundless analogical imagination. (There's even an echo of Abel Tiffauges, hero of *The Erl-King*, whose surname came from Gilles' castle of horrors: suggesting a doubtful conflation of 15th-century murder and modern genocide). Without that imagination, the philosophy seems mannered and lightweight, the history trivialised. Tournier is a magnificent inventor of myths, a poor commentator on those we already know. □

SHORT STORIES

On the map

Victoria Radin

Slaves of New York
TAMA JANOWITZ *Picador* £3.50
The Way Paver
ANNE DEVLIN *Faber* £8.95
The Progress of Love
ALICE MONRO *Chatto* £9.95

TAMA JANOWITZ writes about downtown people in New York. They are an artist who paints in 'ground bones and blood acquired from garbage pails outside the meat market', a convent-educated, Jewish, Southern-born whore who lives with a pimp who reads Kant, an independent filmmaker whose movie, *Forget It*, tells of 'some people who live on the Lower East Side and sell drugs that they had invented. The drugs turn the users into the opposite sex'. The career pursuits of these **Slaves of New York** are odd but accurate: the book could easily serve as a document of the mores of the New York art scene in the late Eighties — which, if you go to a gallery opening there, you'll find includes almost everybody. But Janowitz is not writing a chronicle or a parody quite: least of all a judgment. Though her characters' pursuits may be more entertaining and stylish than most, their feelings are humanly style-less.

'I had no map, no guidelines, no role models for how I was supposed to behave in the modern world,' admits Eleanor. A jewellery-artist who decides to go into millinery, Eleanor reappears in several stories, talking quite nakedly to the reader in a voice which echoes one of Jean Rhys' chorus girls. Like them, she is a *marginale* even on the marginal society in which she lives, bound at first in nervous, disaffected coupledom in a filthy one-room apartment in the East Village to Stash, a he-man painter with a long blond ponytail. Part of the binding is caused by the 'apartment situation': most of Janowitz's unconvinced couples — and, despite their doubts, her characters are nearly all coupled — move in, or continue to live with, one another simply because it's so difficult to find an affordable dwelling of their own. But these material considerations provide them with the courage without which they might never get together at all in a world where everyone is violently at risk from all sides.

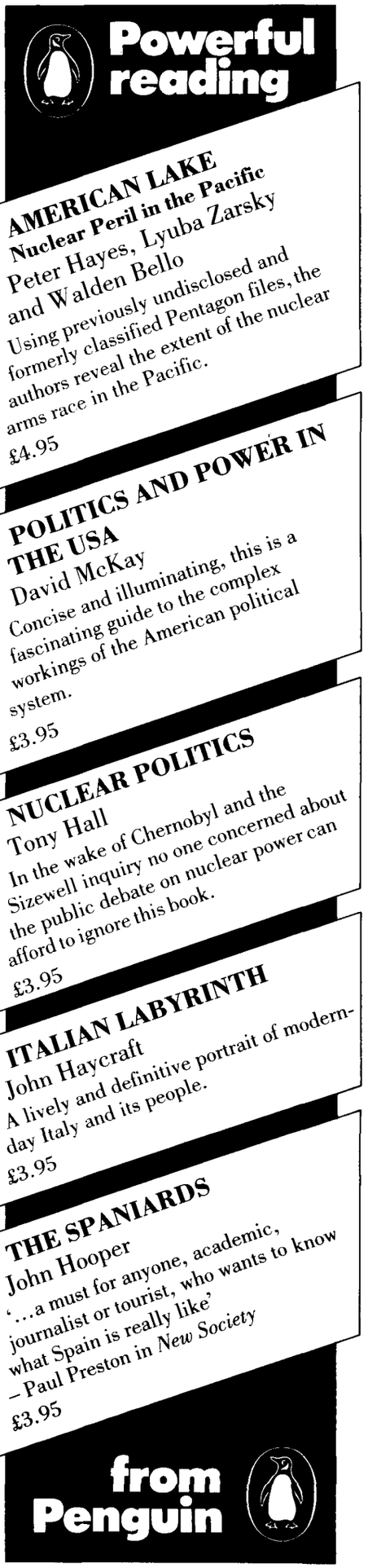
Janowitz writes about people who are not terribly nice with an underlying hopefulness that they'll get nicer; and she shows how little control they have over themselves or their lives without pitying or inflating them. 'It was great to be in love again, particularly so soon after being in despair,' says Eleanor, on the brink of a new life that turns chimerical. This is a very appealing new voice.

Anne Devlin's first collection of short stories, **The Way Paver**, also talks about 'living together and not living together'. Unlike Janowitz, all her protagonists are women, and they all tell their tales in a first-person narrative which excludes any real understanding of anyone else. Fear and unease characterise their lives: they sleep with the lights on and have tantrums during which they break the crockery, which their men, shadowy figures who are never kind or sensitive or loyal enough, nevertheless sweep up.

Devlin has her own peculiar region to write about, and that is Belfast, where she was born. When it provides more than a strictly geographical setting, she is at her most effective: as in her play *Ourselves Alone* and in 'Naming the Names', her story from this collection which she adapted into a recently transmitted television drama. Midway through the printed and more subtle version of this story of an edgy flirtation, we realise that her typically self-doubting and somewhat masochistic Irish Catholic heroine has set up her reluctant lover to be murdered by the Provos.

'Let's just say it was historical,' is the only explanation she can offer in the interrogation room. Does she mean the historical grievances of woman or of the Irish Catholic? Devlin leaves the matter open. These are skilfully constructed stories with a fine ear for dialogue. Behind them all burns an anger caused by gender, class and history. In the best stories that rage meets a target.

It is probably sacrilegious to admit that I don't like the latest collection by Alice Munro, Canadian *grande dame* of the short story, quite enough. **The Progress of Love** shows an extension of her ability to knit a world, moving backwards and forwards in time and in and out of several people's lives to create the illusion of a novel in a relatively short space. This is a development which seems to me to fall between two stools, yielding neither the reader-bonding one gets in a novel nor the bright spotlight one finds in a story. Most of these tales speak of stoicism and endurance — by an abandoned middle-aged wife whose ex-husband visits not only with his new woman but with a naked photograph of the one he hopes to dump her for; the man who realises he is fated always to be the keeper of his dangerously odd brother. The observations ring true and are excellently put and the recognition factor is high; but the stories tend to keep one stranded in the same place, certain of what one already knew. □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Perdition

D. Niv, London NW3
I strongly object to Victoria Radin's unfair criticism of the play *Perdition* (*NS* 6 Feb.) She implies that anyone who dares to criticise Zionism is an anti-semite. In that case what label would she stick on me — an Israeli who is prepared to question and challenge the wrongdoing of Zionism?

I suppose Ms Radin will be quick to label me as a person who suffers from self-hatred. Perhaps, but I can assure Ms Radin that anyone who had been involved in the relentless policies of Israel against the Palestinian people, and has some conscience left, will come to hate the extreme manifestations of Zionism.

In *Perdition*, as Ms Radin herself points out, the accusations of collaboration between zionist leaders and the Nazis were made by an extremist Israeli group (Irgun), and *not* by the author of the play. The facts of the case are already well known inside and outside Israel. I cannot see the point, therefore, of preventing British people judging the case for themselves.

Abdellatif Jaber, Goldsmith College, London SE14
The banning of *Perdition* is one thing, but allowing Victoria Radin to reply to a 'right of reply' adds insult to injury. Will Ken Loach be given another right of reply? Or is the *New Statesman* bowing to zionist blackmail in allowing Ms Radin the first and last word on the subject?

With regard to the arguments about the play itself, I would just like to add one thing about the history of Zionism. It is a well documented fact that zionists were behind the planting of bombs in synagogues in Baghdad to terrorise the strong anti-zionist Jewish community and force it to emigrate to Israel. (Read: *The Lure of Zion* by Abbas Shiblaq — Al Saqi books.) The book was favourably reviewd by the *Jerusalem Post*.

After the spate of articles in the national press for banning the play, your magazine tried to appear impartial by printing one article for, and one against — a position you failed to sustain.

Worst fantasies

Sheila Lahr, London N20
Edwina Currie's recent remarks with regard to 'the woman who makes the breakfast' running the Kinnock household, has made it clear that a woman can be even more sexist and anti-feminist than a man. It is a pity that the *New Statesman* does not understand this point when it comes to publishing writings by a woman, for the story by Sue Miller 'What Ernest says' (6 Feb.) panders to the worst of male fantasies — black boy threatening white girl with rape while white girl is frightened, but begging for it! No matter that she was the brightest girl in the class, what use was a girl's brain when she had something between her legs that a boy wants!

There is also the suggestion that the girl's liberal, anti-racist parents are mistaken in their attitudes and certainly should have put her into private education! It is ironic that even the excerpt chosen as a heading presents the black girls as an alien people, but in the 'happy laughter' (reminiscent of those cotton-pickin' days!) 'all right'!

Sue Miller is free to write what she pleases, but it is disappointing to read such a story in the *New Statesman*.

Appeal for ANC Freedom College

Glenys Kinnock, Ealing W5
At its Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania the African National Congress is providing an 'education for freedom' for some 1,000 young South African refugees, most of whom have only ever known the apartheid 'Bantu education' system of education for subservience and separation. This letter is an appeal to ask you to help the SOMAFCO community — for it is more than a school — in one very specific way.

African, Scandinavian and other governments, socialist parties and trade unions, anti-apartheid and solidarity movements (including the British AAM and War on Want) and individuals throughout the world have provided material support ranging from construction material to pencils, school furniture to writing paper. With their help the college is thriving, as I saw for myself while I was in East Africa.

However, SOMAFCO is expanding and it urgently needs some additional and important items — in particular electric fans, cookers, radios, refrigerators — to improve the spartan domestic arrangements. The ANC have therefore asked me to help raise the relatively small sum of £7,500 to help them buy this equipment. The Labour Party has set up a special fund and I urge you to contribute whatever you can by sending cheques or postal orders to 'The Labour Party (Freedom College Appeal)', The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17.

As I was able to see for myself in 1985 SOMAFCO is everything that apartheid is not. It is a place of great gaiety and energy, a pla purpose and partnership between people of different races and ages, between pupils an teachers, a place of dynamism where ever learning for the day they can go home to South Africa. They deserve our help. Ple e generously.

Wilfred Owen

Peter Parker, London W11
Jonathan Cutbill's 'essay' on Wilfred Owen (*NS* 16 Jan.) has certainly put the cat among the pigeons, and a very scruffy and disreputable old moggy it was. Since Cutbill requires that we state where we are 'coming from', I had better say that my 'own prejudices' are very much in favour of homosexuality (but even more in favour of balance, integrity and the differentiation between facts and speculation); that I am not an academic; and that I am the author of a forthcoming study of the Great War and the public-school ethos which, *inter alia*, discusses both Owen and homosexuality.

That said, I share neither Bernard Greaves's enthusiasm (Letters 30 Jan.), nor Tony Price's nausea (Letters 8 Feb.), and write more in sorrow than in anger that an opportunity to write about Owen's homosexuality was so badly muffed.

Cutbill's reading of the poems for the purpose of providing a checklist of Owen's preferred sexual 'games' is a moderately entertaining parlour-game, but has little to do with either biography or literary criticism. The obvious, even if 'safe', reading of Owen's poetry tends to hold water rather better than Cutbill's own. Abraham 'bound' Isaac in Genesis, the wording of which Owen follows closely in 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young'; the 'belts and straps' are surely intended to suggest the Sam Brownes of the soldiers in the same way that in the following line of the poem Owen writes of 'parapets and trenches', thus allying Isaac with the sacrificed youth of Europe. To propose that the line from 'Page Eglantine' ('And you my wine') is an invitation to 'water sports' suggests a failure to countenance commonplace poetic imagery for the sake of speculative fantasy.

This is not to say that Owen's poetry contains no sado-masochistic imagery; simply that these examples chosen by Cutbill strain credulity. Cutbill's cavalier suggestion that the removal of several significant words from 'Strange Meeting' would make the poem 'a powerful gay protest' rather than a powerful pacifist protest shows a characteristic disinclination to consider the text as Owen wrote it. If Owen had wanted to write a gay protest he would no doubt have managed without Cutbill's editorial interference. Cutbill assures us (on what grounds?) of the 'sexual significance' of a number of words used by Owen, but he fails to recognise Owen's habit of self-dramatisation in his letters which results in the frequent use of upper-class initials. Consequently the 'significance of the capital G in Going' is nothing to do with beach huts (what, incidentally, does Cutbill mean by this? 'Coming' I could understand). For Owen, his 'Going' was his return to France, and, as he was well aware, to his likely death.

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Cutbill's interpretation of *Journey from Obscurity* is similarly suspect. Harold Owen's recollections of his last meeting with his brother do not show Wilfred gently bringing round the conversation to 'The Topic', but simply asking his brother to tell him 'something about the fleet. Or better still, something about yourself.' It is Harold who brings up the question of homosexuality, and Wilfred's pompous and disingenuous response could scarcely be described as 'fast footwork'. Indeed, it sounds so unlike the Owen of the letters that I am inclined to suspect (though I cannot assert) that Harold Owen made up the entire conversation in an attempt to persuade the world that his brother was not homosexual.

That there were homosexual cabals in the early decades of this century is certainly true, but Sassoon's introduction of Owen to Robbie Ross was surely intended as a boost to the young poet's career rather than his sex life. Ross was an influential literary figure and the first thing he did was to introduce Owen to Wells and Bennett, neither of whom are noted for their active membership of 'the gay community'. Even Osbert Sitwell was less important to Owen as a fellow-homosexual than he was as the co-editor of *Wheels*, a magazine which solicited and published Owen's poems on the recommendation of Scott-Moncrieff.

On the charitable assumption that it was lack of space rather than lack of evidence which caused a number of claims to be left unsubstantiated, perhaps you would invite Cutbill to answer the following questions:

1) At what point did Owen come 'out as gay to his mother'?

2) What evidence is there that Owen 'has found sex but is unhappy about its casual nature' or that he 'badly wants a love affair'?

3) Which poems 'show him having several short love affairs'?

4) At which point did Leslie Gunston rebuff his cousin?

5) Is Cutbill seriously suggesting that Edinburgh's 'submerged tenth' consisted entirely of rent-boys whose services the philanthrophic Dr Brock recommended to his patient?

I do not say that there *is* no evidence; merely that Cutbill's thesis (like any other) requires that the evidence be produced.

Few sensible people today would deny that Owen was homosexual and that this should be taken into consideration in any discussion of his poetry, but Cutbill's portrait of Owen as a 'streetwise', proselytising, professional gay is unrecognisable. It ill becomes Cutbill to sneer at the 'narrow and sectarian' approach of heterosexual critics if all a homosexual critic can produce is an unscholarly mishmash of misreading and dubious speculation brazenly served up as 'the truth untold'.

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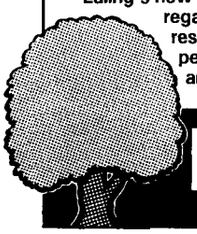

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BILLBOARD

Enquiries: Laura Berryman 01-251 5487

Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252 Olivier (open stage) **SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR.** Lyttelton (proscenium stage) **COMING IN TO LAND, SCHOOL FOR WIVES.** Cottesloe (small auditorium) **THREE MEN ON A HORSE, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.** See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629. 26 & 28 Feb. at 7.30pm. **School of Slavonic & East European Studies 'THE ELDER SON'** by Vampilov (performed in Russian) 5-7 Mar (2 p.m. 5 & 6, 7.30 p.m. 5 & 7) **UCL German Department 'WOYZECK'** by Büchner (performed in German). 3 Mar. 7.30 p.m. **LONDON SINFONIETTA at the Logan Hall.**

Sponsorship

PRODUCER/SPONSORS ANGELS
urgently required for Theatre Project BASED ON MAJOR RUSSIAN POET/DRAMATIST
Contact Francesa Hamilton LABYRINTH 01-722 5346 01-881 1418
Excellent references BOX (08) 4566

HEARTSEARCH

AFFINITIES. Discerning Dating for busy, single, professional people like you — who don't believe in leaving their personal lives to chance. Tel. 01-226 3337 for further details. W51.8

ARE THERE any well-educated gentlemen, tallish, sixties plus, seeking sincere relationship with lady, smart appearance, pleasant personality. Varied interests. London, Home Counties. Telephone appreciated. Box (09)4571. W9.6

BEAUTIFUL ORIENTAL Girls wish to contact gentlemen for friendship, love and marriage. Please send s.a.e. for further details of this serious programme to: Miss S. Ounban, P.O. Box 39, Reigate, Surrey RH2 8YX. W7.16

BIRMINGHAM: TALL, handsome, quiet male (30), interests: theatre, walking, reading, sports — seeks attractive female company. I'm apolitical but open-minded. Photo appreciated, but A.L.A. Box(09)4570. W9.7

BLONDE, PETITE, pretty female 30, graduate, interests: arts, left politics, travel, sunbathing — seeks non sexist male, Yorkshire/Manchester area, has transport. Box (09)4581. W9.8

COLOURED, MID-FORTIES male staying in Scandinavia visits London mid March. Wishes to meet lady thirties-forties, for non-intimate but pleasant, light-hearted companionship; concert, theatre, pubs, dining and future correspondence. Box (09)4567. W9.9

DATELINE'S PSYCHOLOGICALLY accurate introductions lead to pleasant friendships, spontaneous affairs and firm, lasting relationships including marriage. All ages, all areas. Free details: Dateline Computer Dating. Dept. (7NS), 23 Abingdon Rd, London W8. Tel. 01-938 1011. N49.20

DON'T BE SHY! A bachelor, 35, 5′ 11″, kind, solvent, supportive, intelligent, few vices, awaits you in Yorkshire. Feminists, children, cats all welcome. Box (09)4580. W9.10

Enrapt by **BEETHOVEN, LOUIS ARMSTRONG,** the **IMPRESSIONISTS?** Then read on—This warm, affectionate graduate woman, 40s, seeks to explore relationships, countryside, London with sensitive, caring, non-macho post-graduate male, 45-60. **OBSERVER** reader preferred to share most NS interests. Box (06)4479. W6.6

DRAWING DOWN THE MOON
The alternative introduction agency for thinking people.
Everyone seen personally. For your free consultation or brochure phone Mary Balfour on 01-938 1721.
7-11 Kensington High Street, London W8 5NP. Open till 8pm and Weekends.

FEMINIST SOCIALIST, enjoys talking, reading, driving, co-counselling, cooking and having fun, works in Welfare Rights. Fed up with waiting for a sensitive, loving, self-aware man to arrive. Wants to hear from an unattached one interested in a serious relationship. Manchester, Birmingham or areas between. Be brave! Box (09)4574 W9.11

GREEN LEEDS female, passionate conservationist, 44, 5′ 10″, long dark hair, slim, long legs, Guardian reader, culture vulture, wholefoodholic, would share stripped-pine life, great outdoors with desirable man. Box (09)4573. W9.12

HEARTSEARCHERS PLEASE NOTE that telephone bookings can only be accepted if accompanied by a Credit Card Number (Access, American Express, Barclaycard, Diners' Club, Visa). N27.18

MANCHESTER WOMAN, early 30s, independent, warm, wants to meet interesting man who isn't frightened of his emotions. Photo welcome. Box (09)4590. W9.13

MIDLANDS: PROFESSIONAL man, 48, some remaining family ties but totally uninterested partner, unwilling to accept complete abstinence (particularly with Spring in the air), hopes to meet woman with adventurous spirit and sense of humour, possibly caught in like situation. Box(09)4568. W9.14

PROFESSIONAL MAN, separated, radical, artistic interests, 55, Guardian reader, Radio 3 listener, pianist, seeks sensitive, affectionate, caring woman, 30-45, for long-term relationship. South West. Box (07)4493. W7.29

QUIET, SHY, male (30), teacher seeks female companionship, romance (?). Likes: cinema, theatre, walking, music, books. Kent, SE England. Photo/s.a.e. appreciated. Box (09)4582. W9.15

RED ROSES for a blue lady, retired in Somerset? She seeks lively, amiable tower of strength, similarly quiet, intelligent, practical, with philosophy of caring. Box (09)4569. W9.16

THIS MAN at 50 sees routes to greater freedom. A woman who walks a similar path could add to the excitement. The journey starts near Manchester. Box (09)4584. W9.17

UNEMPLOYED MALE (30), quite ordinary, addicted to: books, cinema, music (The Smiths to Latin plainchant), theatre, pubs, talking and listening, seeks female for friendship, possibly permanent relationship. Manchester area. Box (07)4490. W7.33

SUN, SEA and sand in April? Attractive, unattached male, 36, seeks similar female, 25 +, to share Cretan frolics (erotic and intellectual) and possible relationship. Photo appreciated. Box (08)4539. W8.14

OLD FRIENDS: an introduction agency for the over forties. Loneliness is not inevitable. Details from: Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, London N5 2DB. 01-226 5432. N15.31

HEARTSEARCH

WANTED: UNATTACHED, unscrewed up, well-read, well-red, cat loving, smoking, humorous man by attractive woman, late 30s — usual interests — for equal creative, sincere relationship. Box (09)4572. W9.18

YOUTHFUL, over 60 male, resident NW London seeks lady for non-platonic friendship; ample figure no obstacle. Am interested in languages and science fiction. Photo appreciated. Box (08)4553. W8.18

WARMLY MISCHIEVOUS, seductive, curly-haired man (young 37), lively, intelligent, creative, attractive, gentle, affectionate, would love to meet similarly imaginative, adventurous, warm, sensual, versatile, discreet female (s) and/or couple (s) for exciting, stimulating fun, fantasies, friendship. London. Photo, frank letter, please. Box (08)4541. W8.15

WOMAN, 42, tall, non-smoker, interests: cinema, music, reading, conversation, walking. Seeks friendship with lively, intelligent, caring man. Box (09)4583. W9.19

AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL JANET BANKS 01-251 5487

Deadline: 4pm Mondays

FRI 27-SAT 28 FEB

SOCIALIST POLITICS BEYOND THE ELECTION – Socialist Society Conference/AGM. How could Britain be democratic? Anthony Barnett, Mike Rustin, Frida Otto-Wolf. Friday 7.30-10 p.m. Kingsway-Princeton College, Sidmouth Street (off Gray's Inn Road). How could Britain be fully employed/non-aligned/have democratic media? Bregette Berthold, Jeremy Corbyn, Andrew Glyn, Pat Holland, John Palmer, Mike Powers, Mike Ward. **PLUS AGM & SCREENING OF SECRET SOCIETY ZIRCON FILM** Sat. 10-6, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Rd (Finsbury Park tube). Adm. Mems £4, non-mems £5, unwaged £2. *Friday session only* £1, £1.50, 50p.

MON 2 MAR

FDA: First Division Association is holding a lecture to mark the Third Anniversary of the ban on Union membership at GCHQ. The lecture to be given by **John Lloyd** is entitled *'Trade Unions and Freedom'*. It will be held at 6 p.m. at Stakis St Ermins Hotel, Caxton Street, SW1. Any member of the public is welcome to attend.

LONDON HISTORY WORKSHOP Seminar. Speaker Ursula Howard 'In this true story, as in real life': working-class writing, 1820-1920, at White Swan, 14 New Row, WC2, 7.30 p.m.

WED 4 MAR

HOUSING & PLANNING POLICIES: Their Effect on Women, Venue: Sheffield. One day event involving workshops on housing, retailing, transportation. £5/£10 with proceedings. Contact: Dorothy Reeves (0742) 731650.

BOOKFAIR

WEST LONDON WOMEN'S BOOKFAIR. For *International Women's Week* at Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway, W5. 4-7 March 11 a.m.-5 p.m., 7-10 p.m. Books, events, creche, food. For details ring Red & Green Books, 144 Churchfield Road, W3. 01-992 6029.

SAT 7 MAR

THE BRITISH NETWORK for Alternatives to Psychiatry. Study Day on The Abuse, Use and Alternatives to major tranquillisers and ECT. Users and professionals will be participating. Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Everyone welcome. Enquiries contact: Mike Lawson 01-845 2977.

SUN 8 MAR

'A POLE IN AFGHANISTAN' talk with slides on the partisan struggle by Radek Sikorski 8 p.m., POSK, 240 King Street, Hammersmith (nearest tubes Hammersmith/Stamford Brook). Sponsored by Polish Solidarity Campaign, 215 Balham High Road, SW17. Tel. 01-767 0393.

CONFERENCE

SCOTTISH HOMES AND JOBS: A conference for local authorities, trade unions, tenants' and voluntary organisations. 27/28 March 1987, Pollock Halls, Edinburgh. Jointly sponsored by ADLO, COSLA, SLGIU, STUC. Contact: Archie Fairley on 041-221 3253.

POSTER

AFGHANISTAN: Free poster depicting Socio-Economic development after the revolution. Please write Friends of Afghanistan Society, 366 York Road, London SW18 5GX.

FORTHCOMING

LEGAL SERVICES: a Socialist Alternative For Lawyers and Non-Lawyers. Conference at University of Leicestershire Weekend 4/5 April 1987. Accommodation available. Application forms from: Pauline Hendry, 74 Windsor Road, London E7.

Stop the Plutonium Reprocessing Plant at Dounreay

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE in Shetland

3-5 JULY 1987

Details:
Shetland CADE
Albert Buildings,
Lerwick, Shetland

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BACKCHAT

FIRST PERSON

Down on the farm

Fraser Harrison

AT LAST GOVERNMENT and bureaucrats alike are admitting what the rest of us have known all along — that farming for surplus, the guiding principle of the Common Agricultural Policy, is folly. Freezing on the peaks of their beef mountains or drowning in the fathomless depths of their wine lakes, they have finally been forced to concede that they have no idea how to get rid of the stuff.

The sheer accumulation of surplus has driven them to desperate measures, most notoriously that of selling grain to our arch-enemies, the Russians, whom it seems we can afford to annihilate, but not to starve. The latest absurdity is the proposal that the butter mountain should, at ruinous expense of course, be processed back into animal fat in order to feed — guess what? — the very cows which produced the milk in the first place, a strategem that gives new meaning to the phrase 'self-sufficiency'. If it weren't tragic, it would be hilarious.

And so, with quotas already imposed on milk and beef, and quotas on cereals threatened, the era of surplus farming is drawing to its chaotic close. Having created the most efficient agriculture in the world, for which taxpayers and consumers have paid dearly, our farmers are now being made to curb their productivity. They are being encouraged to diversify into activities that will add no more to the dreaded geology of CAP food, but will leave the montains to erode away gradually and discreetly.

Yet, in a starving world, whose only reliable crop is more mouths to feed, this policy of running down our national farm is surely a mistake. Obviously, farmers cannot continue to produce with uncontrolled fecundity; nor can they expect the same level of support they have received since the war. But both they and we have the right to demand a better reason for suppressing agriculture than the inability of economists to think up ways of distributing our horn of plenty. (And I still don't understand why it is necessary for our grain to rot in the silos rather than relieve hunger in Africa.)

Not only has the surplus principle been discredited, but so has the belief that the national interest requires limitless expansion from farmers. As a result, a great opportunity presents itself, and it is not hysterical to talk of the possibility, if no more, of a 'rural revolution'. We are liberated from the old priorities of the Sixties and Seventies, and a real chance now exists of curing the countryside's ills by introducing a new scheme of production, and thereby a new way of life for country people.

If, however, the moment is historic, its unveiling two weeks ago was less than auspicious. In a pre-election attempt to please everyone by offending no one, Mr Joplin, the agriculture minister, only succeeded in making himself unpopular. He even managed to provoke the National Farmers' Union into passing a vote of no confidence in him, a rare feat for a Conservative minister. But what is truly disturbing about his department's proposals for alternative land use and the rural economy (a project already hampered by the dubious acronym of *Alure*) is not so much their contents, which are more ominous than harmful, as their paucity, their lack of scale and vision in the face of the great challenge they should be meeting.

Whichever party wins the next election, it is likely to retain Joplin's emphasis on forests and farm woodlands in its plans to take land out of agricultural production. Everybody responds positively to the idea of a countryside enriched by young trees, especially when assured that native broad-leaved trees will be favoured over foreign conifers. It conjures up an appropriate and patriotic vision of oaks and beeches rising out of the scars of monoculture and replenishing the environment. But none of these schemes for alternative land use can be taken seriously, except as therapy and compensation for under-occupied farmers, unless they are made part of some larger, more ambitious strategy. In other words, the planting of trees, no matter how beautiful and environmentally virtuous, will be pointless in the long run without a parallel programme for the development of woodland as a whole, and this must include the regeneration of woodmanship, woodcrafts and industries relying on wood. I am not advocating the revival of unwanted, uneconomic crafts, nor the invention of fruitless pastimes for the unemployed; I am suggesting, however, that these newly planted trees will grow into nothing more glorious than governmental follies if people are not at the same time being trained and employed to harvest them, work their wood and timber, and sell their products.

The reception of Joplin's modest plans has been universally cynical. The country seems finally to have lost patience with farmers, especially the grossly over-subsidised agribusinessmen, and there is a feeling that after all these years of affluence at our expense they deserve their comeuppance and should be left to suffer. There is also a sense of outrage, an emotion all too familiar to conservationists, concerning the sinister proposals for planning controls, which seem to usher a new rural villain — the agrideveloper.

All this is depressing enough, but if one believes, as I do, that we have a unique chance within our grasp to effect radical, structural change, the situation begins to assume the proportions of a tragedy. Instead of encouraging farmers to abandon farming (the NFU has a point), the ministry should be working towards putting agriculture proper on a realistic financial footing, with guarantees of protection for the environment and for its best conserver, the hard-pressed small farmer. At the end of the war a long-term commitment was made, and honoured, to the future of farming; a similar commitment is required today, but this time on behalf of the entire countryside. □

Fraser Harrison's The Living Landscape *is published by Pluto. His next book* A Winter's Tale *will be published by Collins on 6 April.*

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RESTAURANTS

Gracious goodness

Colin Spencer

IF YOU WANT to know how the nobs eat and/or taste a range of the best which our chefs can contrive, yet still have change for the piggy bank, eat a set lunch at one of our grander establishments. It is a canny wheeze, for a three-course meal will cost between £11 and £15, yet, in the evening, much the same food would cost between £35 and £50. An added bonus for Londoners is that the places I've chosen entail an hour's drive into the country and are exceptionally beautiful to explore or just to sit in, be and absorb. So they are good for a weekend venture — when they can be crowded and booking is essential — or, if you can take a day off, are perfect for any early Spring celebration.

The Swan at Streatley in Berkshire rises from the Thames next to the bridge linking Streatley with Goring. Foodies know the village already because of the fame of Patrick Rance's cheese shop, Wells Stores: which is worth a visit, especially for buying the highly delicious, new British cheeses of which Rance has a large selection. There are ewe's milk cheeses, like Beenleigh Blue, Lanark Blue and Redesdale, goat's milk cheeses like Allerdale, Castle Ashby and Satterleigh, as well as plenty of cow's milk cheeses. They have, of course, all the great French names as well.

The restaurant at the Swan uses Rance cheeses and almost every table has a splendid river view reminiscent of Stanley Spencer: punts, swans and willow tree reflections. The chef is Richard Sparrow, who trained at the Connaught — and it shows. You can't get food much better than this and a lunch of two courses with coffee at £9.00 is a snip, while, if you have room for a Rance cheese, an apple flan or a blackcurrant torte, you pay an extra £2.95. To end the meal, you have a choice of Earl Grey, Lapsang Souchong or Ceylon tea as well as of coffee.

I started my meal with a 'tartlet of quail eggs enhanced by woodland mushrooms and laid on a fine garden herb sauce'. Yes, I agree, that enhanced bit gets my goat: I do hate the flowering herb to get into the adjectives as well as the sauces. Looking through the à la carte menu, other foods are enhanced: a shallot and garlic *confit* does it to a saddle of hare; an apple-and-celeriac *confit* performs the same function on a magret of duck. The menu also verges upon Pietism when it speaks of terrines or mousselines being 'laid on' sauces as if in some sacrificial ritual. It's only body fuel, for God's sake. But boy, what fuel: the tartlet pastry crumbled on the tongue, the mushrooms had the scent and savouriness of truffles, the sauce was a golden pool of herby butter and egg yolk. It was so richly sensual, so replete in its Augustan refinement, that one felt the meal had begun and closed around a single dish.

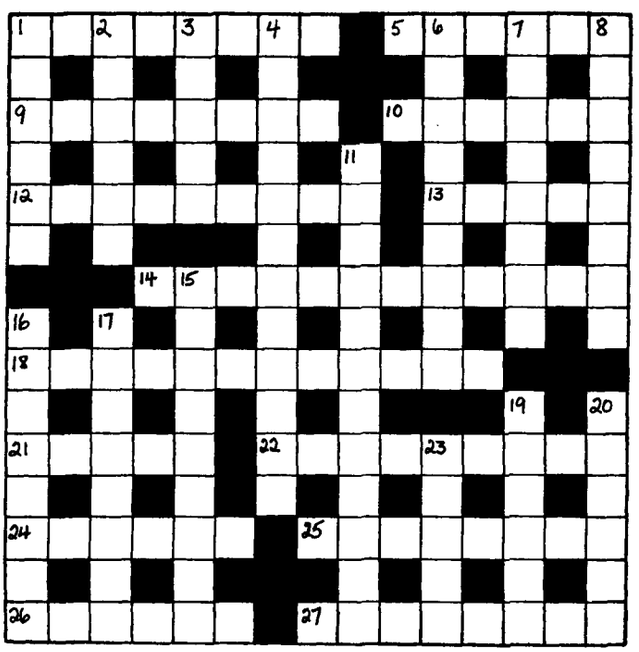
Robert Carrier made famous **Hintlesham Hall** in Suffolk. The house was originally built in the late 14th century but most of what we see now we owe to Richard Powys, principal clerk at the Treasury, who rebuilt at the height of Georgian elegance. The present owners, Ruth and David Watson, keep the house at a high peak of glistening redecoration so that the over-critical might think that Laura Ashley had become the Capability Brown of the interior.

The Hintlesham chef is Robert Mabey who also trained at the Connaught and at Le Gavroche. He claims his influences are the French 'for tradition and instinct' and the Japanese 'for technique and presentation'. The three-course lunch menu at £13.95 had a choice of five dishes on each course. All the produce comes from the farm, there are excellent local oysters and they cure their own salmon. This last dish, served with mustard sauce, melted in the mouth, while a game terrine was pleasantly patterned, garnished with a marmalade-like chutney. The most disappointing course was the real English hand-made cheeses, a dry crumb of Stilton and poor slabs of Cheddar and Double Gloucester. This is almost sinking to the standards of British Rail. Bring on Patrick Rance immediately, Hintlesham, and look to your cheeses.

Gravetye Manor, Sussex, was built in 1598 by Richard Infield for his wife, Elizabeth. Their initials are carved in stone above the garden entrance. Small for a manor house (it has only 14 bedrooms) it is luxuriously comfortable. I was whisked off there from Gatwick, suffering from jet lag, and, despite the recent great freeze, the context was balmy. The gardens were recreated by

Weekend Crossword 1549

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1549, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 17 March.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

ACROSS

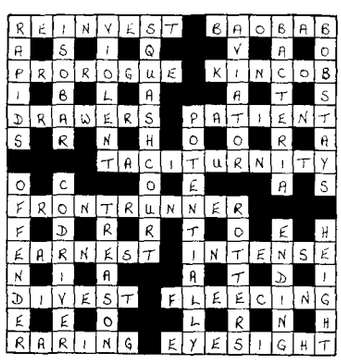
1. Empty words in rhyme (8)
5. Medicine for youth held in a pub like this (6)
9. Stops occasions concerned with publicity (8)
10. Point to an athlete as one who looks happy (6)
12. Greet clan moving about in the quadrangle (9)
13. Island in the Atlantic or further away (5)
14. Something in the garden which shows that the quality improved (8,4)
18. Where fielders are disposed by Roy (12)
21. The final one among home games (5)
22. It may not be true that a girl goes without a drink after one (9)
24. Make a decree and one is turned to gold (6)
25. Idle cats move into defensive positions (8)
26. The fruit is also about to get entangled (6)
27. Bowling which is the pits? (8)

DOWN

1. Antics of a number of mimics? (6)
2. Entering me in the wrong race is fine (6)
3. Letter of thanks after an article (5)
4. Ready for a fight, may go into action with giants (12)
6. Being criminal, turning calm I hid a ring (9)
7. Where to buy a young animal in witches' place (8)
8. Drank freely when worried about nothing being ahead of us (8)
11. Being uprooted meant I was concerned when returning to my people (12)
15. The part is destroyed by one who makes whole (9)
16. Drive the pest away when penalties are taken (8)
17. If there were more than one such extra it would be dead and cut up (8)
19. I leave America and it turns into a place for films (6)
20. Give a servant money for mineral (6)
23. Furious, that is, if the animal got away (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1547



Prizewinner to 1547

Marjorie & Charles Hughes
(Port St Mary, Isle of Man)

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William Robinson late in the last century, his ideas based on the English natural garden. There are views of a lake and distant hills. When I was there, the *hamamelis mollis* was flowering, looking like a Japanese watercolour, and the black swans appeared frozen to the ice. Peter Herbert is the present owner; the set lunch costs £15.

The chef at Gravetye Manor is Allan Garth, who makes sensational fish and game terrines. I had a simple dish of a mousse made from carrot and celeriac with a little tomato coulis, which was blissful. The flavours were delicate but distinct, the colours were ivory and shades of orange: the visual temptation was great and the flavours not so rich that they banished all thoughts of a second course. □

Swan Hotel, Streatley, Berkshire RG8 8HR. Tel: 0491-873737
Wells Stores, Streatley, Berkshire RG8 9HY. Tel: 0491-872367
Hintlesham Hall, Hintlesham, Suffolk IP8 3NS. Tel: 047 387-268
Gravetye Manor, Near East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 4LJ. Tel: 0342-810567

Weekend competiton

No 2964 **Set by Russell Lucas**

After rhetorical disasters like 'the enemy of idealism is zealotry', Neil Kinnock is evidently in need of a new scriptwriter. How about S. J. Perelman? Excerpts, please, from his Perelmanesque address to an LP conference, the Police Federation, TUC, British electorate (after a Labour victory, perhaps), etc. Maximum 150 words, by Wednesday 11 March.

No 2961 **Set by Noel Petty**

Special Branch reports on their search of the Weekend Competition files.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

Oh, you really *relished* this one, didn't you? Some might have hoped that you'd do acerbically witty justice to the most savage State assault on civil liberties since Peterloo. But no — instead you grabbed the chance to indulge (and, boy, do I mean *indulge*) in your favourite subject (yourselves), complain about our already over-generous prizes *and* slagg off your benefactors (us, and especially *me*). However in choosing to award very few prizes this week (and only £6 apiece), I am motivated not by resentment (an emotion which I have always resisted) but by the needs of our ever-expanding readership, to whom the intimacies of our die-hard dozen compers may not mean an awful lot. There's a big, wide world out there, friends — let's not forget it.

Scrutiny of these documents leads to the conclusion that not all 'competitors' are harmless sexual fantasists. Computer analysis reveals strong anti-state/anti-royal/pro-left inclinations. Some 'winning entries' may be in deep code.

Initial inquiries suggest that many recurrent 'winners' work in the state educational system: possibly 'plants'. Action against these may involve sandbagging. Others (e.g. 'Russell Lucas') can probably be committed to mental institutions. Refer to medical liaison committee.

At least one name — 'Basil Ransome-Davies' — is that of an elderly drug-abuser. No one would be surprised by an accidental overdose in this case.

'Noel Petty' should be shot immediately, but in any operation the utmost care must be taken to preserve our 'mole' (code-name: DEVON PONYTAIL).

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Description: a much-thumbed file, grubby, re-used (formerly petty cash vouchers). Forensic found evidence of recent coffee stains (instant, sugared) and sardine sandwich fragments in fold.

Contents: agents' delivery of coded information following pre-set code pattern published at back of magazine. Agents fanatical, working for paltry payments — or else information has low market value. No political originality. Much derivative in style and ideology — e.g. Eastern bloc children's books bore passing similarities to well-known Western children's literature. Unlikely to subvert the average British slow-reader. A. A. Milne featured — Is there a BBC connection?

Suggest low-level check on all agents — dustbin search, phone-tap, mail-opening — for next four weeks. May as well flatter their vanities.

D. A. PRINCE

We woz proseedin thuroo the comp files in a downwurdle direkshun wen orl ov a suden hay sinistur purpoise hemurged.

Wot we av ear is hay colaburativ fretwurk ov activite sells a-usin ov the comp paj has a notisbored. We av hidentified sum ov thair leeders an thuroo thair coad nams sused owt the bigist arias. Bognor Regis (Downtown) an Newport Pagnell.

Them comp reports an setins is coaded genral hinstrukshuns. Sumfink to do wiv takin them botom comp numburs from them top wons an using a secrit list. Sow thaiv orl bin doin a lot ov numbur 2.

We hop to av moor brakthuroos shortle. Sids doin is stuff. Fink i ear the sownd ov a Gray Dorn brakin . . .

M. E. AULT

The feature is conveniently located just inside the back cover, and a number of persons have been seen furtively perusing this page before returning the magazine, unbought, to the news-stand.

Neither Gray Dorn nor Rosie Hughes appear on the *NS* pay-roll and there is some evidence that these may be assumed names. Another suspicious factor is the hectoring tone taken in the Competition Report. We feel that entries designed merely to amuse could not possibly provoke the savage castigation and accusations of not earning their money which so frequently appear.

Most conclusively, however, we could find no trace of humour in any entry. This proves, we feel, that the Weekend Competition is, in fact, a coded outlet of major importance.

ALISON PRINCE

The files in question are of a type worryingly new to us, consisting apparently of weekly messages from agents in various parts of the country. Senders and controllers use obvious aliases, suggesting a double-blind security system.

Forensic have subjected one to scrutiny and detected similarities between the messages. Each has exactly 14 lines and a particular rhyme-pattern; moreover, each begins with the words, 'shall I compare thee to a', clearly a password phrase. Their subversive nature is indicated by the same line's ending: 'copper's nark', 'special branch', etc. The cryptanalysts are still working on this.

There is evidence that payment is made for these messages, but at levels which clearly show the motivation to be ideological.

NOEL PETTY

'April may be the cruellest month but February can be a bit of a bastard too.'

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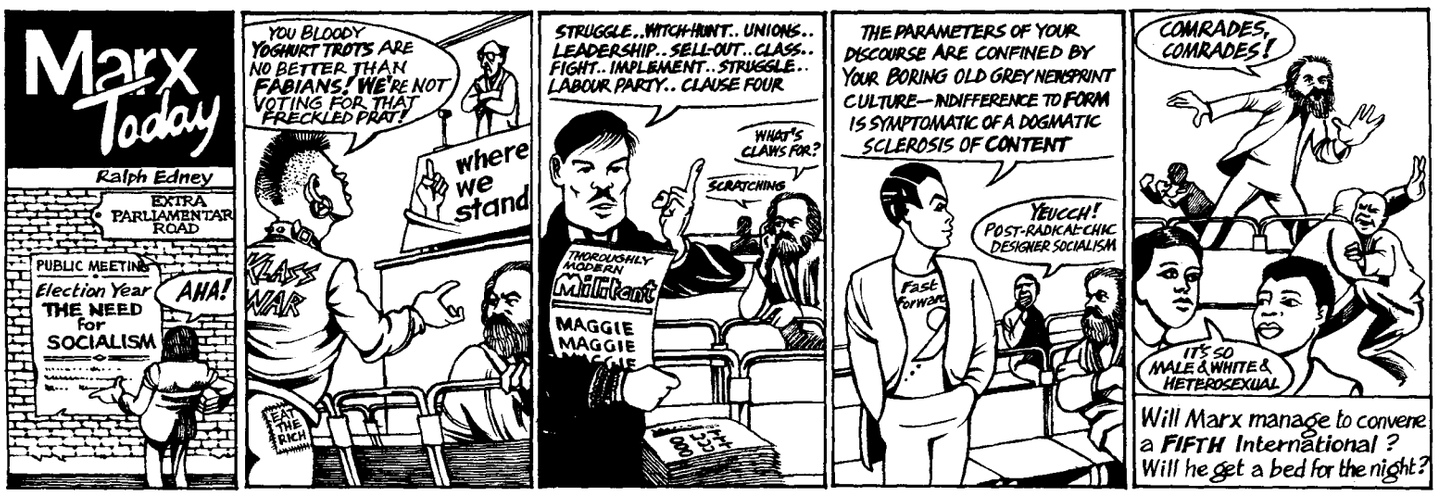
Marx Today
Ralph Edney
EXTRA PARLIAMENTAR ROAD
PUBLIC MEETING
Election Year
THE NEED for SOCIALISM
AHA!
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Will Marx manage to convene a FIFTH International? Will he get a bed for the night?

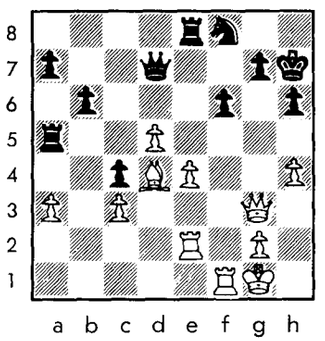
Chess

LAST WEEK I said that three would qualify for the Interzonals from the Praxis British Zonals in Bath. That was what the figure should have been according to Kevin O'Connell, president of the West European Zone.

We should have learnt not to count on the regulations. The players got a shock at the opening ceremony when it was announced that FIDE would only give us two places. With three GMs and two very high-rated IMs (Hodgson and Flear) in the field that meant that the tournament was bound to be a real dog-fight.

The early rounds were dominated by Jon Speelman and Glenn Flear, who were getting every encouragement from the faltering progress of two of their chief rivals, GMs Chandler and Mestel.

On recent form and rating (14th in the world) Murray Chandler had to start as favourite to win the tournament, but things began to go wrong for him from this position in the second round (**Botterill-Chandler**, see first diagram):



I played **33. Bxf6!?** Pressed by the clock, Murray decided that after 33 . . . gxf6 34. Rxf6 Qg7 35. Qf3 White's threats in the f-file were too much to cope with. So **Rxd5! 34. Bd4 Ng6?** But this is fatal. Instead 34 . . . Rd6! threatens 35 . . . Rg6 and after 35. h5 Ne6 Black is still well in the game. **35. exd5 Rxe2 36. h5 Nh8 37. Rf8 Re7 38. Qb8 Nf7 39. Rg8** Black cannot defend both g7 and h8. **Re1 + 40. Kh2** and Black lost on time in the act of playing **40 . . . Re5**, which can be taken anyway.

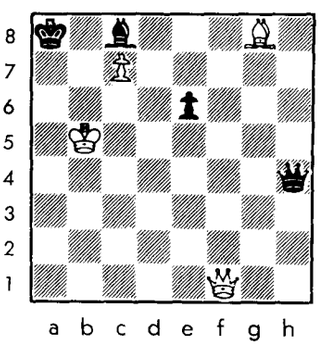
Jonathan Mestel was also below his best. Having just managed to scrape a draw against McNab in round 1 he followed on with a loss on time to Hodgson. In fact all the players seemed to be having difficulty in adjusting to the new time-limit (40 in two hours), with frantic clock scrambles between moves 30 and 40 in most of the games.

IN VLADIMIR Kalinin Wales have the first Soviet emigré to represent one of the home federations. Rather curious that more of the Russian chess brain-drain hasn't come our way, isn't it? Not that Vladimir is a comrade of Korchnoi or Gulko — he just quietly married someone from Radio Cymru. His game against the British champion in the first round turned into a massacre when Speelman's Knight charged through the Black lines:

Speelman-Kalinin, Queen's Gambit Slav. 1. c4 e6 2. Nc3 d5 3. d4 c6 4. e3 Nf6 5. Nf3 Nbd7 6. Bd3 Bb4 7. 0-0 0-0 8. a3 Bd6 9. Re1 e5 10. cxd5 cxd5 11. e4 Speelman opens all the lines, confident that White will be able to dictate affairs. **dxe4 12. Nxe4 Nxe4 13. Rxe4 exd4** Hereabouts Kalinin's moves seem all too passive. 13 . . . f5 must surely be too loosening. But maybe 13 . . . Nf6 14. Bg5 Bf5 15. Bxf6 gxf6 16. Rh4 Bg6 is tenable. **14. Rxd4 Bc5 15. Rh4 g6 16. Bg5 Be7 17. Bxe7 Qxe7 18. Qd2 Nf6 19. Re1 Qd6 20. Rd4 Qb6 21. Bc4 Nh5 22. Qh6** The simple threat of Ng5 forces deperate defensive measures. **Qf6 23. Ng5 Qg7 24. Nxf7! Qxh6 25. Nxh6 + Kg7** but isn't White's Knight trapped now? **26. Ng8! b5** If 26 . . . Rxg8 27. Bxg8 Kxg8 28. Re8 + Kf7 29. Rdd8 Bd7 30. Rf8 + wins. **27. Bb3 a5 28. g4 Nh4 29. Re7 + Kh8 30. Nf6 Nh3 + 31. Kf1 Ng5 32. h4 1-0.**

Problem

This study, by P. Joita, proved too tough for all the finalists in the Lloyds Bank Problem Solving Championship last month. Can you do better? White to play and win, with the difficulty being the avoidance of stalemate defences.



Solution to last week's *shatranj* position. Black's moves are ('F' for Firzan) **1. Fd5 2. Fg5 3. Rh3 4. Rg3** and **5. Rg5 mate.**

George Botterill

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☐ Artificial leg wearers are being asked to mark the limbs with their postcode — after four turned up in a police lost-property department. — *Sun* (G. Moor)

☐ The national anthem is to be banned at championship contests as part of a plan by the British Boxing Board of Control to combat hooliganism. — *The Times* (Wynford Jones)

☐ One of the major sources of iron, which makes up ten per cent of the iron consumed in Britain, is that added to white bread and white flour, compensating for that removed in the processing. This iron is largely derived from ground-up metal from old cars and scrap metal. — *Here's Health* (William Goldman)

☐ A Tory council has given a teenage topless model £400 to help her further her career. Amanda Parvin (19), the current Miss Rochester upon Medway, was handed the cash after councillors in Rochester, Kent flicked through her photograph album and voted by a big majority to support her. — *The Scotsman* (J. Edwin Macdonald)

☐ One elderly woman, accompanying her husband's coffin, insisted he was still entitled to his duty-free allocation. The customs officer did not have the nerve to argue for long. — *Observer* (Huw Richards)

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